

The Kirov-Royal Exchange

Dance and Dancers

AUGUST 1961

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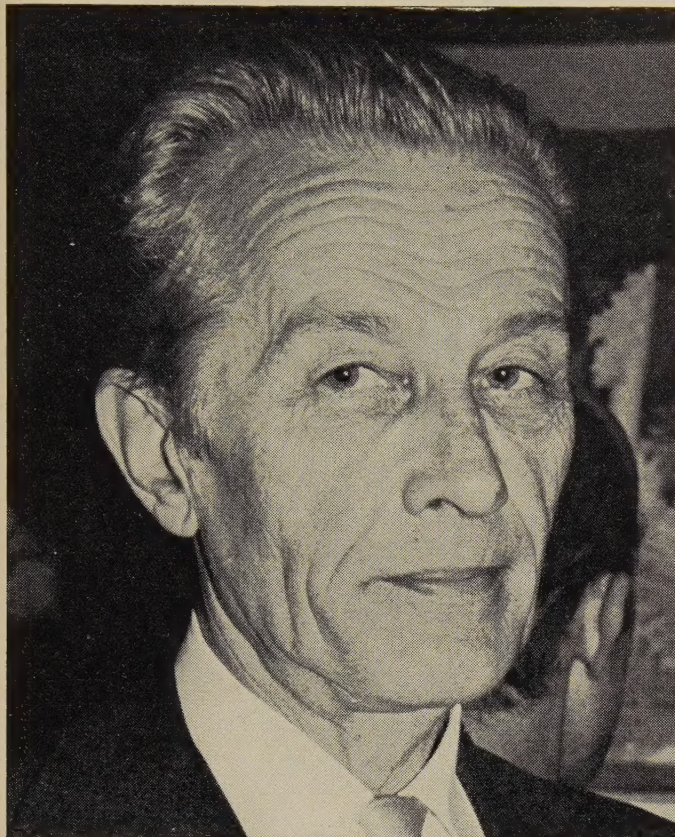


Photo : D. and D.

VLADIMIR BOURMEISTER

IF Russian choreographers have such things as vintages, then 1904 might be regarded as a good year, for it saw the birth of both George Balanchine and Vladimir Bourmeister. The first was to become the most celebrated choreographer in the Western world, but Bourmeister did not impinge upon the West until one day in 1956 when he brought his ballet company from the Stanislavsky and Nemirovitch-Dantchenko Theatre in Moscow to Paris. There in Paris his very personal, and very dramatic version of the full-length *Swan Lake* caused a sensation, and soon critics and ballet-lovers from all over Europe were trekking to Paris to see this marvel. His own choreography for ballets as varied as *Straussiana* (an involved ballet of the *Beau Danube* school), and excerpts from his versions of *Esmeralda*, and *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, as well as his contemporary war ballet, *Les Rives du Bonheur*, all caused considerable interest.

It was perhaps not unexpected when last year Bourmeister became the first Soviet choreographer — unless one counts Balanchivadze, which one doesn't! — to be invited to work with a Western ballet company. The company was the Paris Opéra Ballet, and for them he mounted his by then celebrated *Swan Lake*. This met with such success that it appeared to have changed, at least for a time, the entire attitude of Paris to the full-length classics, and the complete pattern of Parisian ballet-going. It was, however, left to London's Festival Ballet to invite Bourmeister to produce his first completely new work for a Western company, and this project reached its fruition on July 17, when the company produced *The Snow Maiden* at the Festival Hall.

At time of writing the ballet has not yet been seen, but from the most casual conversation with members of the company it is obvious that whatever the success of the ballet, the company itself has found a great inspiration in working with this ascetic-looking, strong-minded man. We have never ceased to press the point of how much Eastern and Western ballet has to learn one from another, and indeed in recent weeks this has once more been emphasised by the visits of the Kirov Ballet to London and the Royal Ballet to the Soviet Union. Nothing can facilitate this exchange of ideas so much as the exchange of choreographers, and for that reason if no other Bourmeister's presence among us is to be welcomed.

August 1961

Dance and Dancers

Editor: PETER WILLIAMS Associate Editor: CLIVE BARNES

Assistant Editor: E. C. Mason.

WORLD'S LARGEST SALE IN THE FIELD

Five-Year Pendulum

SINCE 1946 and the first visit of Les Ballets des Champs-Élysées, Le Nouveau Ballet de Monte Carlo, Ballet Theatre and the enthronement of Sadler's Wells Ballet in Covent Garden, the post-war vintage years of ballet have come round with astonishing five-year regularity — 1951, 1956 and now, 1961.

In between, when the vintage is bad, we have a tendency to lose our taste for ballet, just as we do for claret, and our palates start to thirst for other delights — then along comes a year like this and our interest becomes rejuvenated. Just think for a moment what this year has meant. The Royal Ballet has completed its sixth tour of America and proved that there has been no falling-off in its popularity and a maturing of its performance; now it has enjoyed a fantastic success in that stronghold of ballet — Russia. Ballet Rambert, Britain's oldest company, has battled through the years developing choreographers and artists and refusing to give way at any point on the high artistic standards it has always had, and comes up this year with a vintage Balanchine ballet (*Night Shadow*) and other new works. London's Festival Ballet has just completed a continental tour that has enjoyed as great a success as any company ever achieves overseas and now comes up with the first work ever created on a British company by a Soviet choreographer (Bourmeister's *The Snow Maiden*).

That is what our major companies have done this year, but there is plenty of other activity, and Western Theatre Ballet continues to improve and become an important force in the provinces. Then there are other activities such as Sunday Ballet Club, the Hintlesham Festival, the Midlands Festival of Ballet and the Masque Ballet Club. Only in Edinburgh have they relinquished their position as being the most important festival for ballet presentation, though the re-working of old ballets by MacMillan, Darrell and Rodrigues and danced by Western Theatre Ballet, which is Edinburgh's only concession to ballet in this year, does not amount to total disregard.

To give body to this vintage we have had the first of the Kirov Ballet from Leningrad (the rest of this issue will tell you what we feel about this notable event) and the second visit of Jerome Robbins' Ballets: U.S.A.

In all this one could hardly say, as some people have been saying with chop-licking glee, that ballet is dead. Possibly at no point in ballet's history has it been so healthily alive. Healthy, because it has survived the hectic years of wild excitement and sensation and is starting to build up a solid structure on the fabric supplied by centuries of tradition. Yes, this vintage should be drunk and savoured.

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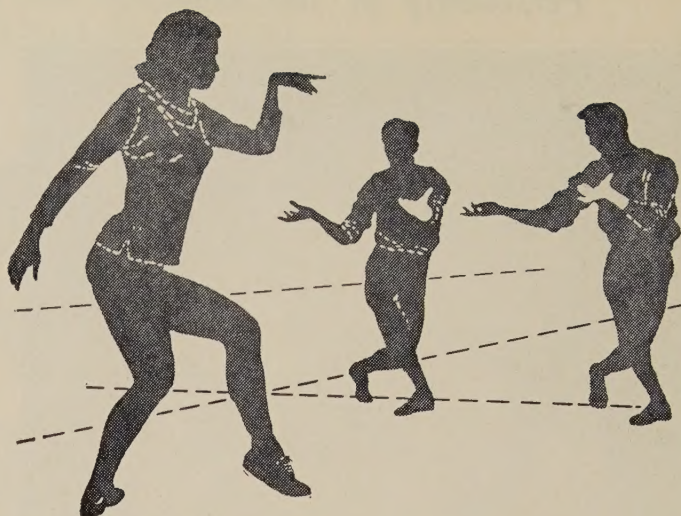
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AFTERNOON OF A FAUN (left): Veronica Mlakar and John Jones in Jerome Robbins' version of Debussy's symphonic poem which has décor and lighting by Jean Rosenthal and Irene Sharatt costumes.

NEW YORK EXPORT, OPUS, JAZZ (right): Douglas Spingler, Robert Thompson and Edward Verso in Robbins' ballet to Robert Prince music, Ben Shahn designs and Jean Rosenthal lighting.

Photos: Samuel Lurie

The Return of Ballets: U.S.A.

IN the middle of September, two years ago, it was quite a common sight to see a queue stretching up Shaftesbury Avenue. Of course queues are not uncommon in London's meagre attempt at imitating New York's Broadway but this queue was for a theatre that was not in that street at all — it was for the Piccadilly Theatre which nestles unobtrusively under the eastern wall of the Regent Palace. And what were they queuing for? Just hoping for returns in order to see Jerome Robbins' Ballets: U.S.A. on their first visit to London which was playing for one week only. Somehow they hit London like a whirlwind and for months after people were wondering just what had hit them. Well, now they are back again and everyone has three weeks this time so that they can find out.

The group of hand-picked dancers which Jerome Robbins chose for a group to represent America at Spoleto's 1958 "Festival of Two Worlds" is one of those rare phenomenon that breaks all the generally accepted rules of ballet-making and company-building. Lack of continuity is always said to, and invariably does, spell death to any ballet company. But Robbins stares death in the face and forms, disbands and reforms his Ballets: U.S.A. just when he chooses, or in between producing and choreographing musicals and films or creating ballets for other companies. Such is the devotion of his dancers that they will invariably down-tools from whatever they happen to be doing and follow him whenever he cares to pipe a tune. In these days of ambivalent genuflections, that's something.

Possibly more than any other national dance company, folklore excepted, does Ballets: U.S.A. represent the American attitude — its speed, its directness, its humour, its emotions. In many ways it represents in dance what *The New Yorker* magazine represents in American literature.

When Robbins chooses his dancers he looks for a strong foundation of classical technique because he believes that this is the only foundation upon which it is possible to build a number of dance styles. He himself was, of course, a fine dancer as those who saw Ballet Theatre's first seasons will remember. His years of dancing with the several "Russian" companies that used to tour America gave him the idea that America had a way of dancing that was all its own. It has been his main task ever since, in the various mediums in which he has worked, to develop his original idea.

His present company, formed mainly as an expedient in the beginning, has, during its re-formation since, become the essence of what Robbins believes in for American dance. As well as using American dancers, he uses American painters and American composers. Possibly the most important feature of the company is that what it shows is marvellous entertainment which has attracted to ballet all kinds of people who frequently shun it as an art that is becoming too egg-headed. If ballet can be entertaining, then it would seem that it holds its place as one of the major arts of the theatre.

NEXT MONTH

In the September issue of *Dance and Dancers* there will be reviews and pictures of Festival Ballet's *The Snow Maiden*, Ballet Rambert's *Night Shadow* and *A Place in the Desert*, the Midlands Festival of Ballet, and the second London season of Jerome Robbins' Ballet: U.S.A.

Look for the cover of Festival Ballet's *The Snow Maiden* on August 25.

The Royal Ballet — Away

The first visit of the Royal Ballet to Russia

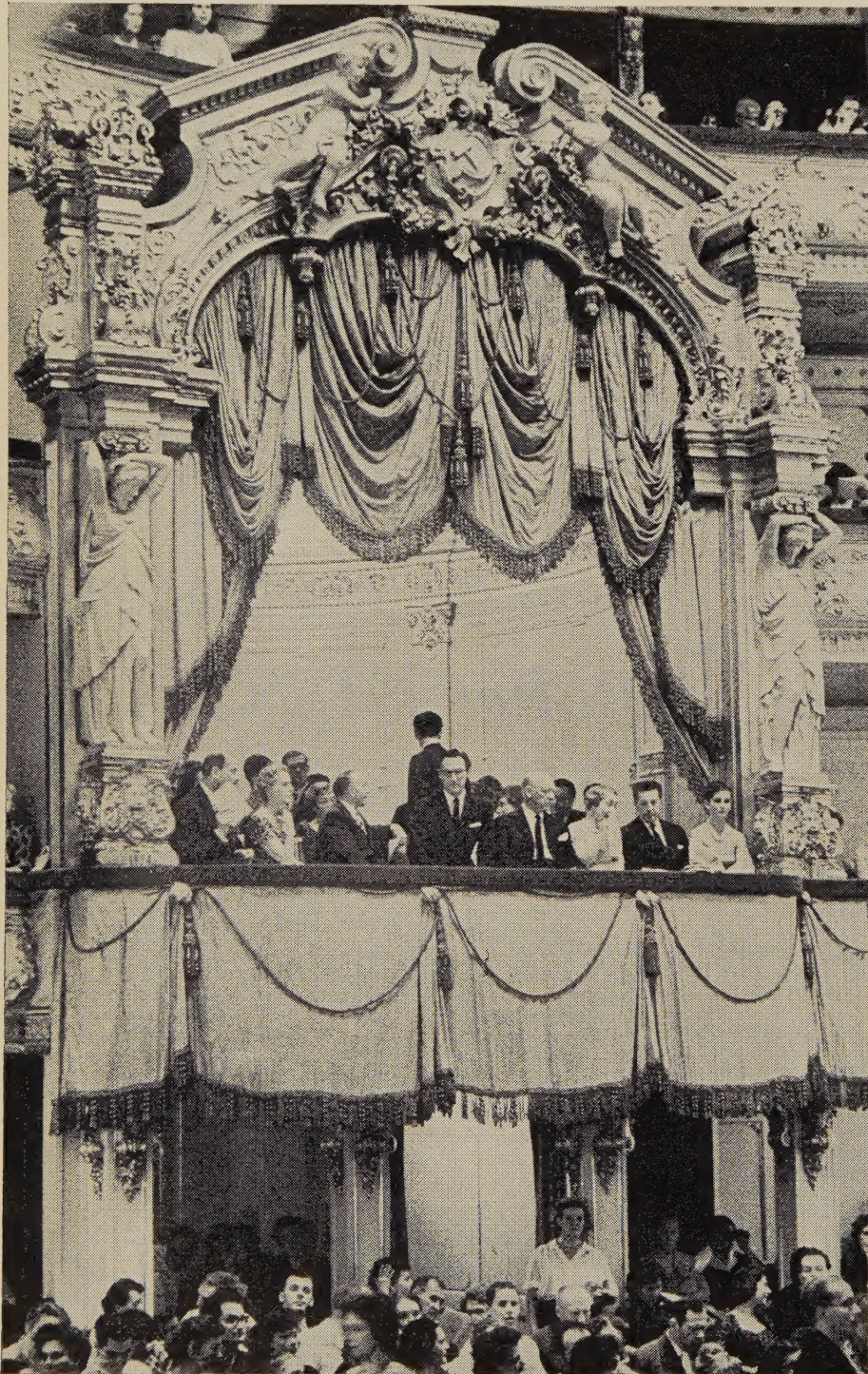
by NOËL GOODWIN

Photographed by DOMINIC

IT was a few minutes after seven o'clock on Thursday June 15 when the curtain went up on *Ondine* in Leningrad's Kirov Theatre — an historic moment for the

Royal Ballet. Here was the company appearing not only for the first time in Russia, but dancing on the very stage which, in former days, had cradled the

OPENING NIGHT IN LENINGRAD: In the principal box of the Kirov Theatre on the Royal Ballet's opening night in Soviet Russia can be seen: Michael Wood, Dame Ninette de Valois, John Hart, Sir David Webster, Frederick Ashton and Anya Linden together with the British Ambassador and other important officials.



birth of ballets and their dancers so far-reaching in their influence on the entire art. More particularly, the seeds from which the Royal Ballet itself has flowered were sown by the St. Petersburg emigrants from this theatre half a century ago.

As I watched the performance from a seat in the central box, I was conscious of what the occasion must have meant to Dame Ninette de Valois and her colleagues. It was the summit of an achievement, of a career spent single-mindedly in building from a tradition and style too precious to lose, and in cultivating it to flourish in a new direction that would have freshness of validity and purpose and beauty. It was no chauvinistic feeling that prompted an upsurge of pride that night, but an awareness that the Royal Ballet was possessed of a living medium of art, and what it had inherited it had also fructified.

Only one thing, perhaps, was missing—the presence of Tamara Karsavina at the scene of her own first triumphs to personify the link between past and present. (But we remembered her, and some of us brought copies of *Theatre Street* to re-live a little of her story from the buildings we could identify.) The dancers that night and the next, when it was the turn of *La fille mal gardée*, performed with a sense of the occasion that ensured a warm welcome from the Leningrad audience, and an immensely successful start to the company's five-week Russian tour.

I had the delight of attending the first two Leningrad performances, as well as sharing the life of the company from the time they arrived four days earlier. It was, for me, a fascinating week's experience. I am indeed grateful to them for their kindness and co-operation towards an intruder in their midst, for letting me freely attend classes and rehearsals, and for the chance of getting to know something of their problems from the other side of the proscenium. But such comments as you may find in this article are my responsibility alone.

Speaking no Russian, I could not make direct contact with the people there except through interpreters. This is a handicap in assessing the effect of the opening performances, but it was quite clear that *Ondine* marked a distinctive individual triumph for Fonteyn, and a prestige success for the company as a whole. It did not have the rousing popular impact which some reports suggested, and which *La fille mal gardée* certainly did on the following night. The reasons are not far to seek. *Ondine's* music is cast in an idiom entirely strange to the Russians, and it is choreographically more subtle and intricate than the ballets of their own kind.

I sensed a decline in enthusiasm from the second act onwards. The first was warmly received: bursts of applause for Fonteyn's entry, for the glade setting in the second scene, for Grant's Tirrenio and for that superb *tableau* of the *corps de ballet* arranged in the form of a cascading fountain (which nobody has clapped in my hearing at Covent Garden). The seascape of act two and *Ondine's* supported dance on the waves in the last act also brought applause, but there seemed to be an expectation among the audience for some other point of choreographic climax. It was not filled by the "Mediterranean divertissement", brilliantly though it was danced.

DANCE AND DANCERS

From haphazard questions I gathered that the ballet appealed more to the younger members of the audience, who were impressed by the way, as one put it, "all the music is used up in the choreography". It would seem that British ballet makes a great deal more use of *terre à terre* work than the Kirov does, a point reinforced by the dancing at a graduation class of the Kirov School which I attended. In *Ondine* the music was politely considered to be "interesting", and Fonteyn was universally admired for her grace and purity of line, her expressive warmth of personality. "Not for nothing is she known as the English Ulanova" wrote the critic in Leningrad's evening paper next day.

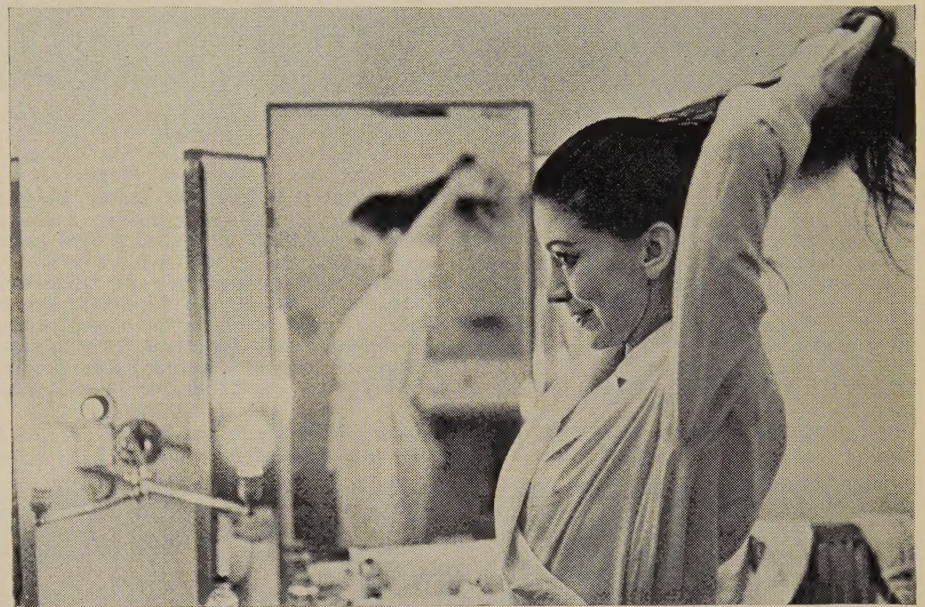
La fille mal gardée was another matter. The simplicity of its music removed the initial obstacle encountered by *Ondine*, but its pastoral charm, brilliant highspots of dancing and genial comedy of character were greatly to the audience's liking. Uncertain at first whether to show visible amusement, they rapidly thawed as the first act progressed and greeted Grant's airborne exit under the remains of his red umbrella with a great roar of laughter. Nerina and Blair's *grand pas de deux* in the second scene was stormily applauded, and acclaimed with the slow, rhythmic handclapping denoting special enthusiasm when it was over.

Nerina, of course, was already well known to Leningrad audiences. She had danced *Giselle* there some months previously, and was welcomed back as an old friend. But the strength of technique and personality in David Blair's performance evidently came as a striking surprise, as

BEHIND THE FOOTLIGHTS: Top right, John Hart and Dame Ninette with their backs to the house curtains watch the second act of *Ondine* being set.

Middle right, Margot Fonteyn in her dressing room at the Kirov preparing for her rôle of *Ondine*.

Below, the final curtain call after the Royal Ballet's opening performance of *Ondine* at the Kirov. Left to right, can be seen Julia Farron, Michael Somes, John Lanchbery, Frederick Ashton, Margot Fonteyn and Alexander Grant.





MOSCOW BOUND : Left, on the bus bound for Leningrad airport are Gerd Larsen, Dame Ninette de Valois reading an English newspaper, and Svetlana Beriosova. Right, on arrival at Moscow, Dame Margot Fonteyn is greeted by Bolshoi ballerina, Maya Plisetskaya.

did the wit and pathos of Grant's character dancing, and the *travesti* comedy of Stanley Holden's clog-dance. The company was widely admired for its youthfulness of appearance (the average age, I suspect, being considerably less than the much larger Kirov company). Frederick Ashton, shyly edging round the curtain for his solo call, was given an ovation.

Both the ballets have seldom sounded to

better effect than here. One reason was the higher level of the orchestra pit, enabling more of the detail to be heard than usual and bringing joy to the dancers who say that at Covent Garden they often find that what doesn't escape into the auditorium is liable to evaporate under the stage, leaving them rhythmically stranded. Such musical features of *Ondine* as the harp solos accompanying *Ondine's* dances, or the last-act

piano concerto (admirably played by Jean Gilbert), were revealed to richer significance in this altogether brighter acoustic.

Frankly, I was surprised at the high standard of orchestral playing in such a work as *Ondine*. The musicians were two-thirds from Moscow and the rest from Leningrad, assigned to the company for the full tour. Preliminary rehearsals had been taken before the dancers arrived by

CLASS WITH AUDIENCE : Gerd Larsen gives a girls' class in the Bolshoi Theatre, Moscow. In the front row are Margot Fonteyn, Nadia Nerina and Svetlana Beriosova. This class was watched by a distinguished audience (for solution see opposite page).



Emmanuel Young, who speaks Russian, and were quickly consolidated by John Lanchbery, who soon learned sufficient to establish control and had an interpreter for the rest. We discovered that *Firebird* was as unknown to them as *Ondine*, and that a smooth six-eight rhythm does not seem to be in the Russian musical vocabulary. Otherwise there were few hitches, a great deal of willingness, and rather more accomplished playing on the first night than I thought the Kirov visitors to London enjoyed at their Covent Garden début.

A day's preparation was lost backstage when the 55 tons of scenery, sent in advance by sea, was stacked at the theatre in jumbled confusion, requiring hours of sorting to put it in order. The stage crew, many of them women, were unhampered by union restriction. They toiled long and hard throughout each day's preparations, growing restive only when they had nothing to do. Now and again the language barrier presented problems, usually over a sudden change of instructions because there was no local equivalent of the chargehand to take responsibility for a group, and each stage worker has to be assured individually.

One of the biggest surprises awaiting the dancers when they arrived in Leningrad on the Russian TU.104 jet charter flight was a temperature soaring into the eighties, with a high humidity. It stayed that way through most of the week, making rehearsals exhausting for three and four hours at a stretch, though the dancers acknowledged that it helped them to loosen up easily at class. Dame Ninette or Gerd Larsen took the girls, Michael Some the boys. They were held in a splendid studio at the top of the theatre, its sloping floor exactly matching the fairly sharp rake of the Kirov stage, and making Dame Ninette envious



WELCOME FROM ULANOVA: On arrival at Moscow Airport, the Royal Ballet was welcomed by the stars of the Bolshoi ballet. Here are Michael Some, Nadia Nerina, Donald MacLeary, Galina Ulanova, Graham Usher and Frederick Ashton.

of a facility for which there is no room at Covent Garden.

During rehearsals groups not wanted on stage slipped in for a closer glimpse of the magnificent auditorium. Dust sheets carefully protected not only the stalls, but also the intricately gilded scroll-work fronting each of the five tiers. Uncovered, its

splendour of gold, ivory and peacock blue rivalled La Fenice at Venice as the most beautiful opera house I have seen in Europe. As well as canopied stage-boxes on either side of the proscenium, the old Imperial box is retained in the centre of the first tier. Dark suits and cotton dresses somehow seemed a poor substitute for the

CLASS-WATCHING AUDIENCE: The distinguished audience watching the class, shown in the picture on the opposite page are members of the Bolshoi ballet (Karelskaya and Lapauri can be recognised). Dame Ninette is seen on the far left.





ENTRACTE AT THE BOLSHOI: Members of the audience promenading in the foyer of the Bolshoi Theatre during an interval.

glitter of tiaras and military uniforms for which the theatre must have been a dazzling setting.

On the first night Sir Frank Roberts, the British Ambassador to Russia, and Lady Roberts were hosts in the central box to Dame Ninette, Sir David Webster, Frederick Ashton and others of the Embassy and Royal Ballet staffs, plus a small group of journalists, mostly Moscow-based correspondents of English papers. After the performance the Ambassador gave a party for the company in the Astoria, now Leningrad's chief tourist hotel, where the company was quartered. I doubt whether it has contained so much high spirits all at once; certainly it had never seen anything like Stanley Holden's one-man impromptu mock-cabaret, which kept the party bubbling until two in the morning.

Normally the hotel was exceptionally sedate. Heavy plush furnishings meant a

nightly battle with moths by the score. In the main restaurant at night, a six-piece band dispensed 1930-ish swing, a narrow corridor between the tables serving as a dance-floor. A mild bout of jitterbugging would be indulgently watched by surrounding trade and cultural delegations, but nobody tried to imitate. Pride of place was occupied by two enormous refrigerators, mostly housing nothing but a few bottles of mineral water, where one's drinks could be cooled on request. Meals tended to rely heavily on fish for the first few days, until some discreet remarks produced a higher meat content for the dancers. Ashton, Michael Wood and some others clutched to yoghurt as to a lifeline. All I will say is that I am in no hurry at all to renew acquaintance with Russian food.

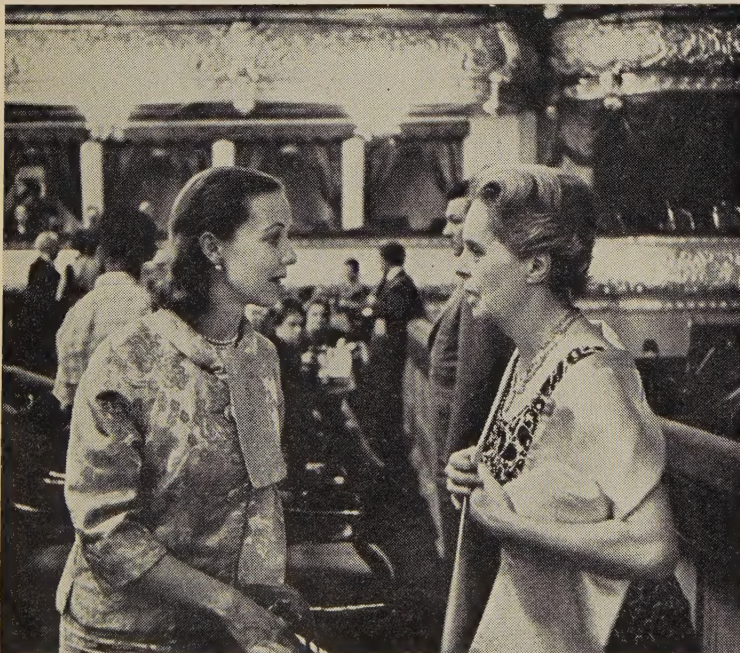
On the other hand, I would have liked longer to explore Leningrad. The prospect along the banks of the Neva is every bit

as enchanting as the travel books maintain, especially during the midsummer "white nights" when the light turns to pale grey and gets no darker all night. I shared a river ferryboat journey one afternoon with David Blair, his wife Maryon Lane and an "Intourist" guide, and found a rewarding new view of the city. Others went for sight-seeing walks, and soon discovered their route to the nearest beach. An afternoon was spent in an expedition to Peterhof, the restored palace an hour's drive from the city, now with an immense public recreation park containing trick fountains to drench the unsuspecting stroller, stone statues hideously coated in all-over gold leaf — and not a scrap of litter anywhere.

Most fascinating of all was a visit paid with de Valois, Ashton, Fonteyn and a small group of other principals to the Kirov Ballet School. While the director organised the class of graduation pupils we were to see, the curator of the school museum displayed its treasures. Pictures and ballet scenes from the great days of the past covered its walls, and a special case housed Nijinsky's original costume from *La Spectre de la Rose*. Admiring its deep cyclamen colour, almost turning to purple, we wondered where the feeble traditional pink had ever come from. In the famous third-floor studio some 20 or so students (among them Anna Wooster, the English girl who has since joined Festival Ballet) gave a short recital. To me it seemed that style and technique were generally marvellously developed, except in a few cases, but at the expense of a limited choreographic vocabulary.

When the time came for me to return home, I had a pang of regret at leaving so many with whom I had found a new friendship as persons and increased respect as artists. I was sorry, too, not to have been able to witness their début at Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre, or the extra performance they were invited to give for the Russian television network. All the same, it was an experience long to be remembered. By now the tour will be over. I cannot think but that it has been a source of encouragement for the future of the Royal Ballet and a proud chapter in its history.

ON AND OFF AT THE BOLSHOI: Left, Nadia Nerina talking to Dame Ninette in the stalls of the Bolshoi Theatre during the opening night of the Royal Ballet in which Ondine repeated its Leningrad success. Right, Svetlana Beriosova comes off stage into the wings during the first performance of Cranko's *Lady and the Fool* at the Bolshoi.





THE KIROV THEATRE: The famous theatre in Leningrad, formerly the Maryinsky Theatre, where the Royal Ballet gave their first performances in Russia and from whence came the company that has been playing at Covent Garden during the past month.
Photo: Dominic.

The Kirov Ballet — At Home

The background of the theatre and the company of dancers of the Leningrad State Kirov Ballet who have recently given their first London season at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

by NATALIA RENE

THE history of this celebrated company runs uninterruptedly from 1735, when the first Russian dancers performed for the amusement of the Court, and especially from 1738, when the founding of a permanent school launched a real national ballet. But, being firmly planted in the best achievements of the past and treasuring its great classical legacy, the Leningrad State Kirov Ballet stands in the same line as all of Soviet ballet and represents a new, higher stage in the development of the Russian school. The principle of socialist realism with which it guides itself consists of presenting a true artistic picture of life, although in no way its photographic copy.

Soviet ballets are founded on a deep and serious idea, expressed through the medium of dance and mime. Classical dance itself, while retaining and considerably expanding the breadth exhilaration and vigour of the Russian school, has acquired new significance and new ways of application. This could not fail to lend its own style to the Soviet school of ballet. The dramatic con-

tent of Soviet ballets, always full of meaning, always carrying a message (and usually conceived by a good dramatist) aims at elevating the spectator to a higher moral plane, rather than merely amusing him.

The Soviet school of choreography considers that ballet is an art of noble passions and feelings, of heroic deeds and poetic love. Such are the fundamental precepts of Soviet ballet, and the investment of the Kirov theatre company made into their development can hardly be exaggerated. It is the Kirov ballet that started the search for greater dramatic content by producing in the 1930's *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, *The Flames of Paris*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Laurencia*, *Heart of the Hills*, thus starting a new period in Soviet choreography. This period brought the Kirov theatre the name of "laboratory of Soviet ballet" — a definition still true in every way.

In its search for new means of expression choreographers of the Leningrad ballet — all at the time very young — borrowed methods of production and some of the

principles from another art — that of the theatre. Ballets became immeasurably deeper in content, all action was motivated. It is true that as results of this eager and serious search for new means of producing impact and motivation Soviet choreographers, particularly those who tried to copy the first successful examples, at times overburdened their ballets with pantomime. But that came later. The achievements of the Leningrad ballet of the 1930's laid a firm foundation on which Soviet choreography stands to this day. It was in this period that the dancer in Soviet ballet became a *dancing actor*, the choreographer — no longer a *maitre de ballet* but also a *metteur-en-scènes*, a man well-acquainted with all aspects of good theatre.

Foremost among this new type of "dancing actors" was Konstantin Sergeyev, *premier danseur* of the Kirov ballet for many years and now its artistic director. Sergeyev's contribution to the building up of Soviet ballet can hardly be exaggerated. Possessing a brilliant technique and exceptional dramatic gifts he was the first (and unsurpassed) Romeo in Lavrovsky's *Romeo and Juliet*, Vaclav in Zakharov's *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai*, and created a whole gallery of original lyrical and dramatic portrayals in classical and Soviet ballets. He has an extraordinarily winning personality.

Sergeyev's biography is quite unusual for a dancer. Contrary to the general rules of academic ballet he started his first classes when over fourteen. His first love was drama and probably the youthful infatuation with dramatic performances and acting in amateur plays were responsible for the development of his dramatic gifts, later so perfectly blended with his dancing. In 1924 the former famous Theatre School of the Maryinsky opened Evening Ballet Courses giving a chance to many gifted adolescents to receive academic tuition.

Sergeyev studied mostly under Victor Semyonov, a remarkable *danseur noble* in his time and a great teacher. The modest youth soon developed into a good dancer. Yet he had no chance to appear at the former Maryinsky theatre — only full graduates of its own school were admitted into the company. Sergeyev then joined a travelling *ensemble* formed by Josif Kschessinsky (brother of Mathilde Kschessinskaya). In the capacity of *premier danseur* he danced at the age of eighteen, leading rôles in a vast repertoire including *Swan Lake*, *Giselle*, etc. After two years' experience in this company Sergeyev, whose talents were now noticed, passed an exam directly into the ninth-year class of the Kirov theatre school and upon graduation under another great teacher, Vladimir Ponomaryov on June 5, 1930, he became in the autumn of the same year a fully-fledged member of the Kirov State Ballet.

In the end of his first season he received the rôle of Siegfried in *Swan Lake*, becoming one of the outstanding principal dancers of Soviet ballet and partner of Galina Ulanova, with whom he formed an unforgettable choreographic duet in *Romeo and Juliet* (1940), and from 1935 onwards he often appeared as guest artist in Moscow. Sergeyev became interested in choreography while still in his prime as a dancer.

Sergeyev the choreographer is inseparable from Sergeyev the dancer. He primarily sees that his characters be endowed with realistic psychological traits while being portrayed in terms of dance. In a preface to the souvenir programme of his first ballet — Prokofiev's *Cinderella* (1946) Sergeyev wrote of his aims: "Dance material should find its development in accordance with the growth of the dramatic image and in strict alliance with the music." Sergeyev has persistently pursued these principles in his productions — whether old or new. He devoted much attention to new versions of the Petipa classics — *Raymonda* (1948), *Swan Lake* (1950), *The Sleeping Beauty* (1952), treating the classical legacy with utmost care, but, at the same time, introducing many new touches in strict harmony with the national tradition of the Russian school. Of particular interest is the new choreography in act four of *Swan Lake*. The *corps de ballet* of swans take in the emotional undercurrent and thus become even more firmly wedded to the Tchaikovsky music. Sergeyev tried to be as faithful as possible to the 1895 original of *Swan Lake* in many details. For the 1950 revival he even restored the black swans of the Lev Ivanov second act.

But contemporary vision is very much different to that of the end of the past century. The black tutus formed too rough a contrast with the poetic imagery of the *ballet blanc* and after a few performances all of the swans were white again. It might be said here that the *Swan Lake* of today can never be the *Swan Lake* of sixty-six years ago. While the principle of symphonisation of the dance, discovered by Lev Ivanov, is being carried on and

developed in Soviet ballet, the presentation of the great Tchaikovsky classics has changed considerably since the days of their first production — an ever-growing harmony is being found with the spirit of Tchaikovsky's music, or, as we call it, with his "musical dramaturgy".

The Sleeping Beauty, revived by Konstantin Sergeyev in 1952, has just received new décor and costumes and some of the *mise-en-scènes* have been revised, tightening up the entire production and enhancing its "grand spectacle" qualities. The ballet also presents the opportunity of showing a galaxy of young talent in its many and different solos. But, however true to the Petipa original, this production is also different, because so much care has been given to revealing the significance of Tchaikovsky's composition; to carrying through the entire ballet the idea of victory of Light over Darkness, Lilac Fairy over Carabosse.

One might have thought that Sergeyev, the perfect *danseur noble*, would remain for ever true to pure classical dance as choreographer. But he sprung a surprise for us in 1958 by creating in *The Path of Thunder* to music by Kara Karayev (a ballet to a South African theme after the novel of the same title by Peter Abrahams), that is contemporary not only in subject but also in dance idiom. In this work Sergeyev has achieved a complete fulfillment of his choreographic principles. He created, in terms of classical steps interwoven with elements of Negro dances, a moving drama about love that is stronger than racial prejudice. In this ballet he choreographed outstanding rôles of the coloured teacher Lenny and the white girl Sari, for himself and Natalia Dudinskaya, his permanent partner in the last years.

Konstantin Sergeyev still appears on the stage, though not as frequently as before. In the season of 1960-61 he danced Albrecht against Nadia Nerina's *Giselle*. He is inclined now to choose rôles calling for his gifts of projection and characterisation. Such a rôle he found in Arbenin, the challenging hero of *Masquerade*, the ballet to Lermontov's famous drama set in St. Petersburg of the early 19th century, choreographed in the past season by the late Boris Fenster. Sergeyev's responsibilities as director of the Kirov ballet and the preparations for the present lengthy foreign tour have not permitted him to concentrate on choreography. But he has not given it up by any means, and to our knowledge is firmly bent on choosing a contemporary Soviet theme for his next ballet.

Natalia Dudinskaya, the company's prima ballerina assoluta, has been moulded as such by the great Agrippina Vaganova. Dudinskaya graduated from the Leningrad school in 1931 and became prima ballerina only a year later. Her dancing is brilliant and has been justly compared to a concert for a violin with orchestra. She used her dazzling technique strictly as a means and not an end in itself and introduced into every rôle — whether in classical or new Soviet ballets, her own reading of the choreographic texture of the rôle and the music. Particularly impressive and memorable was Laurencia in the ballet of the same title to Lope de Vega's *Fuente Overjuna*, a passionate character of feudal Spain created through classical steps alone. But in the rôle of Sari from Sergeyev's *The Path of Thunder* she created a modern West European girl lending an entirely new style and interpretation to the same classical steps.

In the last few years, while continuing

dancing, Dudinskaya started teaching the Kirov ballet's *classe de perfectionnement* in that grand rehearsal room with a double tier of windows and a gallery where the Professor had taught. There is every reason to expect that Dudinskaya will grow into a worthy successor of Vaganova, whose mantle so far has not passed on to anyone either in the theatre or the school. It is Dudinskaya who has inherited to the utmost extent the method of this great teacher, a method that had been worked out on the basis of the best achievements of the Russian school, but adapted to the requirements of Soviet choreography. On the recent tour to London, People's Artist of the U.S.S.R. Natalia Dudinskaya came in the capacity of the company's principal teacher.

The creative atmosphere for which the Kirov ballet was always famed has already proved beneficial for the development of choreographers — very rare fruits of ballet, without whom it cannot, after all, exist. In the 1930's the Kirov ballet produced a series of brilliant choreographers — Lavrovsky, Zakharov, Chabukiani, Vainonen, Jacobson. Now, in the early 'sixties we seem to be witnessing a new similarly prolific period. Not only two new choreographers have been born from the midst of the Kirov ballet, but their work signifies the beginning of new trends in Soviet ballet and augurs a successful solution of the difficult task of creating ballets on contemporary themes that would be equal in artistic significance and the ability to stand the test of time with the best of the classics.

Yuri Grigorovich is only thirty-four and was thirty when, in 1957, he choreographed a new version of Prokofiev's *The Stone Flower*. Not very tall, agile, expressive and endowed with good elevation he made a good demi-caractère dancer, as did his famous uncle — George Rosai, the Chief Buffoon in *Le Pavillon d'Armide* of the first Diaghilev seasons. Grigorovich is the son of Rosai's sister, and therefore grandson of a Florentine by the name of Torquato Rosai who married a Russian woman of peasant origin and settled in Petersburg becoming thoroughly assimilated with his new country.

Yuri Grigorovich graduated from the Leningrad school in 1946 and soon became a prominent character soloist, performing such rôles, requiring both technique and acting abilities, as Nurali in *The Fountain of Bakhchisarai* and the Retiary (gladiator armed with a net) in *Spartacus*. The young dancer showed an interest in choreography while still at school — he choreographed Glinka's *Fantasia* waltz in the last year. His early large-scale productions were those of *Baby Stork* (an entirely new version of this ballet to music by Klebanov) and the first choreographic rendering of *Seven Brothers* (Russian version of the Tom Thumb fairy tale) by the 19th-century composer Alexander Varlamov — both done for the children's ballet studio at the Maxim Gorky Palace of Culture in Leningrad — an amateur group on a very high professional level.

After having seen the Moscow production of *The Stone Flower* the young choreographer was overcome by the idea of creating his own version of this Prokofiev ballet. He started by restoring the original score just as the composer had written it. While absolutely necessary this task presented a certain handicap, since Prokofiev was no longer alive and it was impossible to ask him to rewrite some of the music in order to improve upon the weaknesses of the plot's structure. However,

without interfering much with the sequence of numbers in the score, Grigorovich was able, using nothing but the original music, to introduce some additional scenes and adagios thus enriching the characters of the main protagonists — the stonecutter Danila and the Mistress of the Copper Mountain.

For his choreographic plan of the ballet Grigorovich needed an entirely new third act, the music of which would be in another mood and subordinated to a different dramaturgical development. Lacking such music the young choreographer was prevented from achieving exactly what he had visualised and this accounts for certain weaknesses of the final act in his production. Otherwise *The Stone Flower* was a success from the beginning, placing Grigorovich among the leading Soviet choreographers overnight. In a year the ballet was repeated on the Bolshoi stage, and later at the Novosibirsk Opera.

What are the main merits of *The Stone Flower* and what were the intentions of Grigorovich the choreographer? He looked for (and found) uninterrupted action expressed in terms of dance and plastic mime, engendered by the music, and, so to speak, flowing from it. His large ensembles, such as the betrothal scene of the first act, the precious stones, the fair, are, in reality, single dances, or, rather, dance suites, designed to take part in the progress of the action.

Whenever Grigorovich resorts to mime, as in the character of Severian the wicked bailiff, it takes the form of plastic recitative, subordinated, as much as the dance itself, to the rhythm and imagery of the music. Such a type of mime only brings additional colour to the choreography while remaining true to the very nature of dance-spectacle. Grigorovich completely refused to resort to the so-called "walking pantomime" with the type of acting borrowed directly from the legitimate stage. He also gave much thought to the dance idiom to be used in his ballet. He told this author that when working at the plan of his production in the winter of 1956-57 he was confronted by the problem of whether to use *pointes* or not for the character of Katerina — Danila's gentle bride. Since she is an essentially Russian character, reasoned the choreographer, perhaps he should make her wear shoes and perform Russian steps as the rest of the character dancers in the ballet, while dancing on *pointes* should be reserved for the fanciful image of the Mistress and her retinue.

The answer was found in the music, the choreography being invariably based on the musical form. Where Prokofiev's music was obviously grounded in traditional classical dance-forms, as in the first act, Katerina was given classical variations *sur le pointes* but slightly coloured by elements of Urals' folklore and danced a love duet with Danila in the form of *adagio*. But when Katerina mixes with the people — as in the betrothal scene, or the tempestuous merrymaking of the fair, she acquires one and the same language with them and comes off *pointes*. However, when classical dancing is employed, it is never used for the sake of showing off the ballerina's technique or the choreographer's ability to create interesting *enchaînements*.

Grigorovich expressed in terms of classical dance the thoughts, dreams and young love of his heroes. The dance suites are also introduced with the idea of building up the tension of the story. Everything is subordinated to the action. The Russian dance suite in the betrothal scene of the first act progresses in a gradually increas-

ing key, to end in the sudden and menacing appearance of Severian. The entire scene of the fair is treated by the choreographer as *one* dance. Here he was again guiding himself by the nature of Prokofiev's music. The Russian dance ensembles prepare for the arrival of Katerina, searching for her lost sweetheart. She and the people form one whole. The gypsy dances form Severian's *entourage* and by their rhythms and passionate fire prepare the culminating point of this scene, leading to Severian's terrible punishment by the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, who turns him into stone and sinks him in the earth.

The suite of the precious stones Grigorovich visualised as a large *ensemble* between the Mistress and her domain. The angular movements of the precious stones depart from the *ports de bras* of the Russian school, quite intentionally, since the choreographer insists they were suggested by the brittle quality of Prokofiev's music, expected, as he thinks, to convey the asymmetrical angular structure of crystals. The choreography of the precious stones not infrequently resorts to movements borrowed from acrobatics, reminiscent of the idiom of Fedor Lopukhov's early ballets. This is also intentional, but a happier and more organic application of this style is reached by Grigorovich in the image of the Mistress herself, who coils and twists herself in the guise of a malachite-green lizard around Danila.

The Stone Flower was created by Grigorovich in such close collaboration with its designer Virsaladze that one could not possibly imagine another décor for this production. Soliko Virsaladze has been recognised as the leading artist of Soviet ballet for a long time. His décor for the Kirov theatre *Swan Lake* done in excellent taste, is much better than his own Bolshoi theatre later version, as the London audiences will see for themselves. His *Sleeping Beauty* décor blends wonderfully with the style of ballet "a grand spectacle". He has done many other important décors, including that of Chabukiani's *Othello*. But his work with Grigorovich in *The Stone Flower* and the latest new ballet, *Legend of Love*, is a thing apart.

Virsaladze's work in ballet is symphonic by nature, as is Grigorovich's, and that is why their collaboration cannot be bettered. Also in *The Stone Flower* Virsaladze made the first bold departure from heavily built scenery that takes up most of the stage, and designed a stylisation of a huge Casket of Malachite (such is the title of the fairy-tale from which the ballet originates) wherein *painted* scenery just traces the place of action. An important part is played by black velvet backcloths, while the entire floor space is free for dancing. As in all of Virsaladze's creations, he has had a considerable influence on the choreography of *The Stone Flower*, and one that in this case was the result of complete mutual understanding.

The Stone Flower (and the Kirov State Ballet as a whole) have acquired lately an outstanding new conductor in the person of Niaz Niazie — a musician of extraordinary interpretative talent and rare temperament.

Grigorovich's latest ballet *Legend of Love* to music by Arif Melikov (also Azerbaijani by nationality) is recognised to be a new, higher stage in the choreographer's progress. But it is again in the realm of legend and fairy tale. Grigorovich has yet to prove that his method is equally good for contemporary themes. Igor Belsky, Grigorovich's classmate and coeval, on the other hand, has taken the

more difficult path from the beginning. As a choreographer he is looking for an adequate dance-image of his own contemporaries, and does this through a new and very individual approach to classical dance.

I will not dwell here on his first ballet *Coast of Hope*, of which *Dance and Dancers* readers have read in the March 1961 issue, particularly since it was not included in the repertoire of the Kirov State Ballet's season. But it was intended that London audiences should be shown Belsky's latest ballet — a one-acter to the first movement of Shostakovich's famous *Seventh Symphony*, composed at the height of the siege of Leningrad, when the unheated house, where the composer was creating his work, shook from the blasts of falling bombs. Belsky succeeded in investing this ballet with everything it means to the heart of each Leningrader, and, moreover, to anyone who has gone through the terror of war.

Acclaimed as a choreographic masterpiece after the very first showing, Belsky's new work is a crying protest against war. It is a symphonic ballet in the true sense of the word — a choreographic vision of the composer's symphonic *thought*. Again an important rôle is played here by the designer, M. Gordon, who has resorted to a terse and laconic style. His act-drop shows, on a dark background, an enlarged autograph of the first page of Shostakovich's symphony. A searchlight then picks out an athletic figure of the main hero, a youth, standing with his back to the audience. The stage is filled with more light, his Beloved and his friends come and join in dances that in highly stylised suggestions of the true movements speak of everyday life, of work, sports and games. The back-drop of the first scene gives an approximation of the Leningrad landscape — the tall Admiralty steeple, the Neva bridge.

The innocent youthful revels of the Leningrad "white night" are interrupted by the enemy invasion. The backdrop changes for one of a wartime landscape. Belsky has not shown the enemy as weaklings. In the battle scenes particularly they are strong and menacing. It is not easy to overcome this enemy walking in a gorilla stance to the incessant merciless drumbeat of Shostakovich's music. For a time, in one of the episodes, it looks as if all is lost. The hero, alone, is attacked by the advancing enemy. But he is not alone any longer. Here are three boys, and now there are four and five. They become symbolically multiplied before the audience's eyes, and the enemy is defeated. But the fighting was fierce, and the last episode shows the heroine in a tragic requiem on the site of the recent battlefield. Women's figures come to life from the high relief on the monument to the dead heroes and join the girl in a dance of mourning while the main theme is played by the bassoon.

The tragic scenes are shown without any attempt to be optimistic. The first movement of Shostakovich's symphony does not provide for such a mood. But in the *finale* of the ballet the girls and the youths once more raise their arms in readiness for further struggle and these movements are full of great purity and conviction that sounds a contemporary note. There is no *corps de ballet* in this production and the entire *ensemble* consists of individual very young artists of great dramatic abilities. The two main protagonists are danced with utmost impact by Alla Sizova and Yuri Soloviev, or Kaleria Fedicheva and Oleg Sokolov — who have only recently left the Kirov theatre school.

The Kirov Ballet — Away

All aspects of the Leningrad State Kirov Ballet's season at Covent Garden by
PETER WILLIAMS, CLIVE BARNES and NOEL GOODWIN.

PRELUDE

by Peter Williams

ALTHOUGH British audiences had seen dancers from the Maryinsky Theatre in St. Petersburg pretty consistently from 1910 onwards, it was not until 1921 when Diaghilev mounted his production of the Tchaikovsky-Petipa/Bakst *The Sleeping Princess* at the Alhambra Theatre in London that the impact of the great classical traditions of the St. Petersburg school made themselves felt to their fullest extent. In the minds of the general public Pavlova, Karsavina, Nijinsky, Bolm and so on were adored as "Russian dancers" more as a phenomenon that came from a country rather than as upholders of a great school. For although what Diaghilev presented them in during the early years of his company was mainly Russian in flavour, already after the First World War that flavour was distinctly tinged by artistic trends from Western Europe.

Then came *The Sleeping Princess* and with it a new assessment for here was a tremendously long three-act work which afforded the greatest display of the classical vocabulary that had been seen in Western Europe this century. Here it was possible to see a school based strictly on the academic traditions of the dance but a school whose dancers could turn with equal facility to the newer paths that were then

being developed by Nijinska, Massine and Balanchine. This was a thinking-point for those who cared, in those days, to think about such matters. Mercifully some people did think about them and the result is most of the ballet we see today. Now, of course, everyone reads and knows too much about ballet, but in those days to consider ballet as anything other than just another theatrical spectacle almost amounted to freakishness.

That production of *The Sleeping Princess* (changed from the now familiar and correct "Beauty" by Diaghilev so as to avoid confusion with the English Christmas pantomime) brought us the divine Olga Spessitzeva, a classical ballerina of such purity that to this day it has remained unequalled; it brought us Vera Trefilova who shone in the older classical school, it brought us Lubov Egorova and Lydia Lopokova, already a favourite, all in the Princess Aurora rôle and all from the Maryinsky school. Apart from them and the many other wonderful dancers from Peter the Great's city, the importance of this landmark was that it showed the amalgam of the French and Italian schools into the Russian school in one of the most glittering jewels, both musically and choreographically, of Russian classical ballet.

From then on, even in the minds of the general public, Russian ballet meant something that had stemmed from St. Petersburg, or Leningrad as it came to be called.

THE STONE FLOWER: Alla Sizova, as Katerina, and Yuri Soloviev, as Danila, in the pas de deux which comes at the beginning of the Prokofiev/Grigorovich *The Stone Flower* which opened the London season of the Kirov Ballet.

Photo: Anthony Crickmay.



Even after Diaghilev passed from this earth and in the 'thirties, the ballerinas of that decade — Danilova, Tumanova, Baronova and Riabouchinska — all were directly or indirectly inspired by the Leningrad school. And so were our two first British ballerinas — Alicia Markova (through Seraphine Astafieva and Cecchetti) and Margot Fonteyn (through Astafieva and Agrippina Vaganova via George Goncharov and Vera Volkova).

Apart from this, so far as the rest of the world was concerned, there was silence from Leningrad and silence from Russia's ballet anyway. Through the war years and the 'forties, rumours trickled through of ballet continuing to uphold its traditions, a few books were written and Violetta Prokhorova, married to an English husband Elvin, came to dance with the Royal Ballet. Then there were films, not very good ones, and finally the Bolshoi Ballet from Moscow appearing for the first time in Western Europe danced at Covent Garden a few years ago. In spite of this company's undoubted magnificence, it seemed that the school and style we knew had been lost somewhere along the line. Then last year it was announced that the company from Leningrad, the Kirov Ballet, would visit London this summer.

Plenty of time to think and wonder. Of course we wanted to see them and welcome them, historically it would undoubtedly be a momentous occasion, but would we have certain illusions shattered about the school and the company that gave birth to most of the classical ballet companies in the West? Their opening night at Covent Garden on June 19 was therefore something that one approached with mounting hopes and fears (the reports of their Paris reception were none too encouraging).

After the first few minutes of the curtain rising on the Prokofiev/Grigorovich *The Stone Flower* it became immediately apparent that from a dancing point of view the old Maryinsky school, even with its change of name to Kirov and all that the new Soviet way of thought implied, remained intact. And it is at this point that homage should be paid to Agrippina Vaganova who was the greatest teacher of a generation and who acted as the vital link between the old Imperial Russian Ballet and the present generation. Although she died in Moscow ten years ago, it was in Leningrad that she did her most important work as a teacher after she retired from the stage as a ballerina in 1917.

For the first time since World War II, it was possible to see in this young company (they sent us most of their youngest dancers) from Leningrad something of what the few of us, and that few are getting fewer, remember of the dance as it was in the old days. But don't get me wrong — I am not for one second implying that everything that has happened since the death of Diaghilev is as nothing and of no consequence. Wonderful work has been done that is likely to have a far greater effect on the present and future of ballet than anything that happened then. It is ludicrous and harmful to imply that there has never been anything as great as the Leningrad company; it is equally idiotic to dismiss it all just because there were certain features that possibly did not appeal to a British audience. To say and write such things shows a complete lack of know-

ledge of what ballet is all about.

Ballet, whether it be dramatic, atmospheric, classical, abstract or so-called modern, is DANCE. And it was dance that the Leningrad company showed us and dance that flows in exactly the same channel as that which gave us every great ballerina and male dancer of this century. That, to me, is the shining light which blazes out through everything else which one may have liked or not liked about the season as a whole. The various productions are dealt with in detail later but it is dancing as a whole that seems to me to be the beacon that has lit up this ballet year.

Leningrad has been called the laboratory of ballet in Russia. Successful dancers and creations are frequently then moved on to Moscow to the more opulent Bolshoi company where it appears they go through some sort of burnishing-up process — the ballets acquire a great sense of drama and the dancers acquire a more spectacular technique, a technique that tends in some cases to become flashy. Anyway, it is the right way to go about it because if the Leningrad ballets lack a sense of drama, and some of what we saw lacked this to a remarkable degree, it does mean that the young dancers are starting off on the same solid foundation of schooling that has given the world so much.

There is a softness about everything they do — they soar into the air without any noticeable preparation. Their *plié* and *fondue* is a natural extension of a downward movement and never appears to come to any abrupt halt as with so many Western dancers. They always appear to be beautifully placed. In this respect their wrists were always most eloquent — not exaggerated like some of the Moscow dancers, nor carefully getting into a correct classical position like many of our dancers but always a natural and beautiful extension of the arm. Their arms were wonderful — boneless, imperious and always forming a perfect composition with the rest of the body.

There was always the impression of great reserves of strength and no strain. During the whole season I never saw one dancer who ever appeared to have reached any limit. In fact, dancing appeared to be as natural a function as breathing, walking or eating — they would only stop when it was time to go to sleep. Of course, there were the lifts, these we have come to expect, and these too were performed without any sense of effort — the ballerina became weightless. I also loved the way they threw off extraordinary feats as a mere nothing and part of a natural utterance, feats which in the West would so often be turned into a *tour de force* to win applause. It was noticeable that many exquisitely executed steps that would hold up the ballet with applause in performances by Western companies were received in silence at Covent Garden. This had nothing to do with the fact that they were not perfectly performed it was merely that every feat was naturally integrated into the phrase as a whole. This is what I can remember of Olga Spessitzzeva and is the way that people used to dance.

In their character work they show a sense of style for occasion. For instance, their Polonaise in *The Sleeping Beauty*, their Czardas and Mazurka in *Swan Lake* were given with the refined breeding that should always be apparent when these dances are given at court. Smaller steps, no bravura and a natural but subdued pride and, above all, a sense of enjoyment. Here they differed



THE STONE FLOWER: Alla Sizova in one of the beautiful lifts that are a feature of the choreography.
Photo: Anthony Crickmay.

from the Bolshoi who have considerably broadened these dances — more suitable to an environment of the market place than a court. In contrast the Kirov give character dances in both *The Stone Flower* and *Taras Bulba* that are virile, uninhibited and as wine-sodden as dances should be when given by peasants at fairs and in celebration. Environment plays a vital part in determining the nature of character and national dances and this is something that the West has never really come to grips with.

There were naturally a few things that to our eyes might be considered faults. For one thing some of the feet were bad judging by our standards and they provided an odd mixture — sometimes you would see a row of girls with very bad feet then you would look further and see another group with the most beautiful feet. Then some

of their finish was untidy and they had an unfortunate habit of letting dances tail off at the end and just stop rather than finish. Turn-out did not seem to worry them as it does us. And their lack of interpretation was also very surprising at times. But the main thing was that they danced and danced magnificently.

The great lessons to be learned from this season were, first of all, *épaulement*. That magic word, so pitifully neglected in the West, which means that the shoulders are placed so as to give majesty to the whole body. This shouldering that can turn Cinderella from a kitchen slut into a ravishing princess far more effectively than a *posse* of fairy godmothers, a cart-load of pumpkins or an army of rats. *Epaulement* is a word that is now whispered more convincingly around our Western classrooms — but it should be shouted. But

these Leningrad dancers have it and therein lies the secret of much of their greatness.

Fluid arms are something that I sometimes despair of Western dancers ever achieving but it would be encouraging if out of this visit some school could make the arms of our dancers sing instead of stutter. Then there is the soft deep *plié* and *fondue*. And it would be good if we could at last relax our apparent aversion to the Russian *attitude-arabesque* for when done at the right moment it has breathtaking beauty. The fact is that in a few years it will be an integral part of the classical vocabulary all over the world — so why not start now! But more than anything there was the lesson of how to use the stage — the whole stage. It is as if these Leningrad dancers say: "The stage is my kingdom, here I rule and I rule on every part of it. It is my right and the audience's right that when I am on this stage I should cover it with every quality I have at my command — I should run across it, I should leap across it, I should roll across it if I had to. I should have complete command of the stage itself and the air above it. All this is here for me to use for my brief moments of glory and use it I most certainly will."

To me it was deeply moving to see these young Leningrad dancers use the stage and to see that they used it in just the same way as did Pavlova and Spessitzeva and doubtless Karsavina and Nijinsky. There may be political and artistic upheavals but this great school continues. That I find something of considerable comfort in a world that changes bewilderingly almost from hour to hour. That their classical productions had not been so carefully and lovingly preserved was to me a disappointment. *The Sleeping Beauty* was so nearly

excellent had more attention been paid to detail. *Giselle* was, apart from some of the dancing, a near disaster. *Swan Lake* was, without question, the best classical revival they gave. They won the day in both *The Stone Flower* and in their divertissement programme by the sheer power of their dancing. So it was the dancing that carried the season and somehow when faced by dancing of this calibre, the other elements of ballet tend to slip away into obscurity.

In the West over the past two decades, dancing in ballet has too often been sacrificed on the altar of ingenuity — of clever ideas, of smart décors and of intricate complicated choreography. Of course, these things are necessary but they are not the ultimate goal. As singing is to opera, so is dancing to ballet and when there is a drop in the level in either then the art suffers. The visit of the Kirov ballet has taught us again that the whole art of ballet stands or falls or is perpetuated by its school. The school in Leningrad, that first gave us birth is still tops.

THE BALLETS

The Stone Flower

First given at Covent Garden on June 19, 1961.

WAS it silly for the Kirov Ballet to open their Covent Garden season with *The Stone Flower*? Perhaps, but silly or not the choice was quite inevitable. Here was the only ballet new to London. Here was a major ballet score — and the last score at that — by the Soviet Union's most distinguished ballet composer. Here was the only modern work in the Kirov Ballet's London repertoire. Not to have

used *The Stone Flower* would appear like an act of cowardice, or, even worse, a vote of no confidence in its qualities. Even so, it was possibly unfortunate that *The Stone Flower* so immediately, so palpably and so neatly underlined the differences between Soviet and Western ballet.

A number of my colleagues have either publicly or privately expressed regret that they were unable to orientate themselves by seeing the dress rehearsals, and it is probably true that a lot of the more extravagant nonsense written about the ballet would not have been written if the writers had been able to see it a second time before committing their thoughts to print. (Personally, as luck would have it, I had a narrow escape, for the second time I saw the ballet I thought I had written far too enthusiastically after the first performance, and it was not until the third night that I revised my opinion right back, but individual follies apart, the principal of dress rehearsals for critics is still a sound one.)

The most obtrusive stumbling block placed in front of a Western audience approaching *The Stone Flower* must surely be its libretto by Prokofiev's wife and the original choreographer Leonid Lavrovsky, based on themes taken from P. Bazhov's book of Urals folk tales, *The Malachite Casket*. This symbolic story of the rôle of the artist in society and the processes of artistic creation is a difficult pill for Western audiences to swallow without choking with insensitive laughter. Nothing is easier, or cheaper, than to make fun of this story from our own "bourgeois" viewpoint, but this kind of humour is yahoo provincialism at its despicable worst.

Equally, it would be silly to go the other way and to pretend that this theme

THE STONE FLOWER: Left, Danila (Soloviev) meets the Mistress of the Copper Mountain (Alla Osipenko).

Right, Alla Osipenko as The Mistress of the Copper Mountain who possesses the secret of stone.

Photo: Anthony Crickmay.



can mean as much to us as it would to a Communist audience, brought up quite unconsciously and naturally on the tenets of Socialist Realism. With a little thought we can see and understand something at least of the significance that parable might have to a Russian audience, but this is a far cry from being able to respond emotionally to it without any conscious thought about its meaning. The fact that we have continually to translate the theme into the terms of a foreign ideology, standing like Ruth amid the alien corn, is bound to detract something from its total impact. (A Soviet audience would, incidentally, be placed in much the same position if they saw *Le Baiser de la Fée*, which shows a similar theme treated along the lines of Western philosophy — they would, I suspect, think it decadent.)

Nor is the theme the only off-putting aspect of *The Stone Flower*. To Western taste the scenery and costumes by Simon Virsaladze are almost indescribably dull, dowdy and lacking in creative fire. We in Britain have little enough cause to congratulate ourselves on our visual taste, but seen on the possibly inhospitable Covent Garden stage with its awkward sight-lines, this often looked dreary almost beyond words. Finally, there is the disappointment of Prokofiev's last ballet score, which is a sad trickle of repetitious melody to have emerged from one of this century's most distinguished composers of ballet music. On the other hand, this is perhaps a comparative failure, coloured by our memories of *The Prodigal Son*, *Romeo and Juliet* and, to a perhaps lesser extent, *Cinderella*. Looked at on its own admittedly shallow merits this score has something to commend it, and while lacking in distinction supports the choreography with unspectacular efficiency.

These are, if you like, the weak things about *The Stone Flower*, or at least, weak from our own specially conditioned viewpoint, and by careful concentration on these aspects of the work it would be possible to build up a fairly convincing picture of the ballet as an almost total failure. Yet to do so would be completely unfair to its immense qualities, and, moreover, to miss the significance in what might one day be regarded as a turning point in Soviet ballet.

It seems surprising to me that both London and New York (who saw Grigorovich's *The Stone Flower* danced by the Bolshoi Ballet on May 4 1959) have not noted the difference between this and any previous Soviet ballet they have seen. A new wind appears to be blowing through Russian ballet, and this is the first result of it to be presented in the West.

Facts about Soviet ballet are almost incredibly difficult to find. Igor Moiseyev, writing his famous article "The Ballet and Reality" in the Soviet *Literaturnaya Gazeta* for April 24 1952 made the point: "The lack of competent ballet criticism is simply amazing. Year after year ballet workers see no articles appearing in the press posing questions of principle or pointing out causes for merit or demerit in their work." Moiseyev continued by saying, "It is time the ballet began thinking and acting in a new way. Its possibilities are incomparably richer than they are being made to appear . . ."

In this very important article Moiseyev, in the course of chiding quite gently the Bolshoi choreographers Leonid Lavrovsky and Rotislav Zakharov, made two major points. The first was a plea for greater realism in the Soviet ballet theatre, and for "subject matter close to the life of the people". The other was for, quite simply,



THE STONE FLOWER: The setting for Simon Virsaladze's opening scene with its permanent surround of the Malachite casket which is used throughout the ballet.

more dancing. Moiseyev said: "Nobody would think of belittling the significance of clever miming in ballet. But the most expressive, most emotional, most poetic language of ballet is the dance. The choreographer is a producer, thinking in terms of choreography, and in seeking expressiveness he must turn to the medium of the dance, not shun it. Unfortunately, even in a production of such great stature as *Romeo and Juliet*, a ballet that profoundly depicts the Shakespearean tragedy, the choreographer, L. Lavrovsky, gives undue weight to the element of mime, as if mistrustful of the language of the dance. We have justly criticised many old ballets because they did not combine the dance with healthy thought, but we cannot permit new ballets to have healthy thought uncombined with the dance."

As might be expected this article, which I think was symptomatic of the way many people in Russia were feeling, created considerable controversy. At that time Lavrovsky was preparing for the Bolshoi ballet the first version of Prokofiev's *The Stone Flower*, which had its first performance in Moscow on February 12 1954 with a cast including Maya Plisetskaya, Ludmilla Chorokhova, Alexei Yermolayeff, Serge Koren and Vladimir Preobrazhenski. The ballet failed, being criticised for not having enough dancing in it, and for being out of touch with life. After a comparatively few performances it appears to have sunk without trace.

In 1956 Moiseyev himself was invited to stage Khatchaturian's *Spartacus* for the Bolshoi, apparently with considerable success. But Moiseyev is the same generation as Lavrovsky and, for that matter, Balanchine (although whereas these latter two are Leningrad graduates, Moiseyev came from the Moscow school) and it must have been clear that the real revolution in Soviet ballet would be most likely to come from the younger ballet masters. Historically the Leningrad Theatre has always been the creative centre of Soviet ballet; after all,

Lavrovsky himself started there and it was Leningrad that saw the creation of *Romeo and Juliet*. Consequently it seems to have been towards Leningrad that Soviet ballet looked for its next development.

Leningrad has now emerged with two choreographers, both born in 1927, Yuri Grigorovich and Igor Belsky. Significantly they both place the emphasis on pure dancing in their work, and as such stand somewhat apart from the majority of their Soviet predecessors. It would perhaps be too simple, indeed it would be too simple, to suggest that Russia is at the beginning of a neo-classical revival in ballet, but something of the spirit which overtook Western ballet during the end of the 1930's now seems to be present in Russia.

Grigorovich's first important assignment was this present new version of *The Stone Flower*, first produced at the Kirov Theatre on July 6 1958 with Alla Osipenko, Alexandre Gribov, Irina Kolpakova and Anatole Gridin. Such was its success that it was almost immediately reproduced at the Bolshoi Theatre in Moscow on March 7 1959 in preparation for presentation during the Bolshoi Ballet's New York season two months later. The first Bolshoi cast included Maya Plisetskaya, Vladimir Vasiliev, Ekaterina Maximova and Vladimir Levashev. I understand that for the present London season, Grigorovich has very slightly amended his ballet, particularly in the choreography allotted to the hero, Danila, who it was originally thought did not have enough dancing. This then is the background to *The Stone Flower*.

C. B.

PRODUCTION AND CHOREOGRAPHY—Grigorovich and his designer Simon Virsaladze, have conceived the ballet in a very fluid form, with one scene carrying on to the next, with the frequent set changes usually taking place during the action of the ballet. This is in keeping with their idea of the work as a continuous whole. Similarly Grigorovich has shunned



THE STONE FLOWER: Left, Irina Gensler, as *A Gipsy Girl* who dances at the fair. Right, Anatoli Gridin as the overseer Severian who dances drunkenly at the fair with his gipsy friends.
Photos: Anthony Crickmay.

divertissement structure, and tried to give complete continuity to the choreography. This is particularly notable in the fine fair-ground scene, where decorative and narrative dancing are intermingled into a flowing, ever-changing pattern.

Grigorovich has selected two choreographic styles for his ballet, one for the human characters and another for the creatures of fantasy led by the Mistress of the Copper Mountain. Hero, heroine, villain and villagers are all depicted in a mixture of classical dance and folk dance, while pure neo-classical dancing is used to imply the fantasy.

To my mind Grigorovich is at his most successful in the human scenes. He handles his choreographic masses with the typical skill of the Russian school (this is something all Russian choreographers seem to excel in) but his merging of classical and folk dance is remarkably inventive and tactful. Here he has taken all the technical advances of Soviet dancers and used them to extend his choreographic range. I have never seen Soviet-style choreography used to better advantage. Admittedly here and there he falls back upon padding. Yet it must not be forgotten that this is the first major work of a young man hardly over thirty, comparatively inexperienced, and attempting to break away to make a new type of ballet. In the circumstances it seems only surprising that there is not a great deal more padding.

When we come to the neo-classical scenes of fantasy, Grigorovich appears to be on more uncertain ground, and his work does not here stand comparison with similar choreography created in the West. Although Soviet ballet masters are naturally used to employing pastiche classical choreography in revivals of 19th-century ballets and later imitations, this is the first example

we have seen (and more importantly the first example we have even read about) of a choreographer using neo-classical choreography as a contemporary creative medium.

In creating these dances Grigorovich had no Western models to assist him, although to judge from some of his groupings I would guess that he has been influenced by photographs of various ballets by Balanchine, Ashton, MacMillan and their like. Unfortunately his use of the neo-classical vocabulary remains naïve, with its accent on symmetry, and is never imbued with the same quality of imagination that runs through the rest of the choreography. At its worst, it is a little reminiscent of Lifar in its relentless, pounding lack of subtlety, yet even here Grigorovich reveals a sensitive feeling for musical phrasing.

Where Grigorovich most vividly shows his exceptional promise is in his creation of immediately communicable dance images and dance characterisations. Dance images are nothing new in Soviet ballet. Lavrovsky in his masterpiece, *Romeo and Juliet* uses them to wonderful effect, and it would be difficult to better a dance characterisation such as Lavrovsky has given Mercutio. But Grigorovich is peculiarly whole-hearted in his approach to dancing and never entrusts his narrative or characterisation to the sort of recitative dancing typical of Lavrovsky and Zakharov. In this he is probably more Western than older Soviet choreographers.

The character of Severian and his evil entourage is expressed entirely in descriptive dancing of a rare perceptive brilliance, and the sinuous angularity of the Mistress of the Copper Mountain projects a dance characterisation of unusual consistency and power. Even in small details Grigorovich shows his superb artistry — those melting,

lilting lifts characteristic of Danila and Katerina so evocative of spring love, Danila's typical pose with his hand clasped behind his neck, reminiscent of Nijinsky's famous pose in *Narcisse*, and suggestive here of youth and idealism, or the carefully visualised gypsy dances that merge so satisfyingly into the general fairground picture. Here, I suggest, is a choreographer of more than usual promise.

This is not a great ballet in the way that Lavrovsky's *Romeo and Juliet* was a great ballet. On the other hand, with all respect to Lavrovsky, works such as *Romeo*, however fine they may be in themselves, represent a dead end in the development of ballet. The business of ballet must be dancing, and Grigorovich (and, or so I imagine, Belsky) realises this in much the same way as Ashton, although their individual methods must of necessity differ.

Several of our more thoughtful critics in London, echoing what must be an even more prevalent view in the Soviet Union, have suggested that in *The Stone Flower* Grigorovich is retreating from the realism of the Soviet school, which many of us found so impressive when we first saw the Bolshoi Ballet. The argument is partly the familiar one of form versus content, or rather the *emphasis* on form versus the *emphasis* on content. These writers should consider the implications of Moiseyev's remark on the elder generation of Soviet choreographers: "Instead of considering ballet from the point of view of life they have been considering life from the point of view of ballet." I consider that this ballet, with all the imperfections deriving from Grigorovich's inexperience, is in the great tradition of ballet making, and can make a genuine contribution to the solution to those problems of contemporary ballet which are the same the world over.

DANCING —Even people who went around long-nosed and superior about the ballet itself, had to admit there was nothing very much wrong with the dancing. A few found it disconcerting that the characterisation was blended into the dancing and not *appliqué* on from the outside — reminding me of what a dancer from the Bolshoi said about Ashton's *La Fille Mal Gardée* when he first saw it a year ago.

The first night honours were divided equally between Alla Osipenko's Mistress of the Copper Mountain, Alla Sizova's Katerina and Yuri Soloviev's Danila. Immediately it became obvious that these dancers had a quite different style from that which we encountered five years ago when the Bolshoi Ballet came to London. This impression, which became fortified as the season progressed, was of dancers in much closer conformity with the Western ideals of classical dancing, all of them derived from the old Maryinsky, than the bolder, more ecstatic style shown by the Moscow company.

Osipenko's wonderfully sinuous dancing, contrasting with her brilliant needle-sharp technique, made a memorable impression as the Mistress of the Copper Mountain. Even so, her dancing, or rather her characterisation, missed a certain seductive quality the rôle obviously called for. There was a perfection to her dancing, and she completely caught Grigorovich's ambiguous movement style with its mixture of acrobatic yet softened angularity and diamond-hard brilliance. The alternative cast, Inna Zubkovskaya, danced well but without Osipenko's panache or eloquence. On the other hand, she had something of the mysterious fantasy, the faerie-quality, that Osipenko seemed to lack.

Alla Sizova's Katerina was the incarnation of youth and tenderness. Her delicate dancing had a fine-drawn strength and the rôle fully exploited an elevation which in most other dancers would have been sensational but which with her seemed natural and unremarkable. Beautiful musicality, exquisite style (including a superbly extended line in *arabesque* and impeccably arched feet), and great expressiveness, made this an enchanting performance. Irina Kolkpakova's Katerina had a touch more of heroism about it, wielding her sickle against the importunate Severian with far more passion, and altogether acting with more conventional force. Her dancing had less charm than Sizova's, and, for that matter, less elevation, yet it was an interesting performance and, of course, beautifully danced.

If Rudolf Nureyev conquered Paris, then Yuri Soloviev conquered London, and the first step in this conquest came with his Danila. His dancing had an heroic grace and ease about it, marvellous *ballon*, and a technique that always seemed to hold something in reserve. For all his apparently careless fluency, all his dancing was strictly disciplined into a classical mould, and even at his most flamboyant he remained a model of academic virtue. His partnering was equally distinguished, but his acting was somewhat underplayed, although he had an impetuous quality and plenty of youthful masculine charm. The other Danila, Igor Chernishev, proved nowhere near so striking a dancer, and here and there the fiendishly difficult virtuoso choreography seemed to give him cause for alarm, as well it might. However, his virile dancing was good by any normal standards and his acting was much more forceful and better projected than Soloviev's. He showed a magnetic personality, and brought a more

bravura touch to some of the partnering in the last act.

The part of Severian is among the best in the ballet, and that exceptional artist, Anatoli Gridin, danced it unchanged during the season. It was a performance of compulsive intensity, of the kind we in England associate with Vladimir Levashev, who in fact does dance the rôle for the Bolshoi. With his deep-set, fanatic eyes, his long body capable of subtly dramatic nuances, with a marvellous gift for static poses, Gridin made such a successful villain that one was at a loss not to feel a certain amount of sympathy for him. His final death scene, when he is swallowed up into the earth, was most thrillingly done and at every performance received an appreciative ovation from the audience. This entire performance was Russian character acting and dancing at its superlative best.

The rest of the cast was also unchanged during the season. Galina Kekisheva showed a wispy appeal as the Fire Maiden, although the rôle and choreography were not much to my taste, looking too much like one of Leonid Jacobsen's more watery "choreographic miniatures". The gypsy dances were led with fine abandon and presence by Irina Gensler and Anatoli Sapogov, two fine-looking dancers of lissom grace and uninhibited animal presence. Oleg Kuznetsov, Valery Bogdanov and Vassili Mishuk made a grotesquely sinister trio of henchmen for Severian, and the fairground scene, with all its evocative echoes of *Petrushka*, was vastly enlivened by the three clowns, led by the immense, red-headed Yuri Korneyev, vigorously aided and abetted by the two Alexandres, Livshitz and Pavlovsky.

C. B.

DECOR —Simon Virsaladze in his designs has been influenced by the fact that the ballet is based on themes from Bazhov's *The Malachite Casket* and his realisation has been rather too literal. The inner stage resembles a casket even to the point of having a keyhole. This framework of rock stratas, suspended in a black curtained space makes a permanent setting while other backcloths are dropped in. In many ways the idea was a good one but it didn't come off. This of course might have had something to do with the sight-lines of the Covent Garden stage which are, I understand, very different to the Kirov Theatre for which the ballet was created; poor and unimaginative lighting cannot have been much help either. On the opening performance it looked as though large chunks of scenery had been left behind in Leningrad — at later performances the lighting improved and it was then possible to see that the black wings were, in fact, intentional.

Ingenuous as much of the design idea was, and the scenes moved from one to another with great smoothness, the basic fault was that the general treatment was far too heavy-handed and lacking in subtlety and the colour sense too crude. I wonder very much if Virsaladze, Leningrad's principal ballet designer and one whom other ballets revealed to have a very considerable talent, has ever studied the work of his fellow countryman — Pavel Tchelitchev. What a wonderful job Tchelitchev would have made of *The Stone Flower* which was not all that far removed in basic form from what he did for Giroudoux's *Ondine* with its rock stratas and alternation between real and fantastic worlds. Virsaladze treats his Malachite in a ponderous fashion — great masses of black and white (which could have been pale turquoise) where a lot of texture would

have given it all such a lift. Malachite always seems to me to be a stone that has exciting possibilities with its glowing green and dark swirling veins.

The Malachite front of the casket rose and fell on a number of unimaginative scenes — hut interiors, hill interiors, forests and fairs — which resembled those middlebrow Christmas cards lying somewhere between the old cottage and herbaceous border concoctions and the pseudo-modernistic.

The costumes for the boys and girls who come to Katerina and Danila's engagement party ran through the spectrum of pastel colours; the divertissement for precious stones in the Copper Mountain was in fondant mauves, greens and yellows with none of them creating a very palatable effect. For the fair folk the colours were mainly of red and orange and effective, while with the entrance of some gypsies we got back again to what would seem to be this designer's favourite colour — mauve. Katerina was dressed in what appears to be a uniform for good heroines in Soviet ballets — a white nightdress. Danila was in the Soviet peasant's uniform — a white shirt open to the navel, tights (pale green in this case) and boots (white). The Mistress of the Copper Mountain in the uniform of a ballet by Serge Lifar — all-over tights (poison-green in this case).

Now none of this may sound particularly appetising, and far too many critics placed undue importance on the mild indigestion it might have caused some delicate Western palates, but these costume designs had something that was entirely admirable — they never obscured the line of the dance. Too long have we suffered costumes in ballet so cluttered up that it was almost impossible for the dancers to move or if they could it was impossible for the audience to see them doing so. And if it is rather disappointing that Soviet contemporary design has fallen into a rut and does not quite conform to our ideas of what we think modern ballets should look like, at least it shows that designs have due respect for ballet's most important ingredient — dancing. That Simon Virsaladze appears to be far happier in 19th-century classics was later revealed and about which I shall tell you later.

P. W.

The Sleeping Beauty

First given at Covent Garden on June 23, 1961.

PRODUCTION AND CHOREOGRAPHY

—What do you think of when I say the word "Tchaikovsky"? Perhaps so far as his ballet music is concerned, we in Britain tend to think of glittering uniforms and even more glittering chandeliers. We like our Tchaikovsky to be vivid, exciting and perhaps most of all dramatic. The Russians, I fancy, think otherwise, at least the Russians in Leningrad seem to. Their Tchaikovsky is quieter, more impassioned and far more lyrical — a soulful poet singing songs of Mother Russia. In this differing approach to the music there lies, I think, the secret of the difference in approach between the Kirov's production of *The Sleeping Beauty* and our own Royal Ballet's.

Konstantin Sergeyev, the producer, has seen *The Sleeping Beauty* as a lyric dance spectacle, and this attitude to both choreography and music pervades his entire interpretation of the ballet. In England our conception of the work is nothing like so definite, and we consequently go to no great pains to impose any unifying style upon the



THE SLEEPING BEAUTY: Inna Zubkovskaya as the Lilac Fairy surrounded by other fairies in the Prologue of *The Sleeping Beauty*. Photo: Anthony Crickmay.

production. But then *The Sleeping Beauty* belongs peculiarly to the Kirov Ballet, and while we have annexed, and very commendably annexed, something of its glory, we still perhaps lack that touch of confidence which comes from rightful ownership.

Petipa created *The Sleeping Beauty* at the Maryinsky Theatre, and it had its first performance on January 14, 1890. As I went into some detail about the origins of this ballet in these pages last May, I do not propose to repeat myself here. Since its first creation there have been many widely differing productions of *The Sleeping Beauty*, yet there can be little doubt that the two most important surviving productions historically are that by the Royal Ballet, still based on Nicolai Sergueeff's

1939 revival of the work from the Stepanov score of the original Maryinsky production, and this present Kirov version, produced by Konstantin Sergeyev.

The souvenir programme for the Kirov season boldly asserts that this Leningrad production "must be regarded as the authentic interpretation." It rather depends what you mean by "authentic", and to an even larger extent what you mean by "interpretation". Certainly the Kirov seems to interpret the spirit of the ballet with matchless fidelity, yet choreographically I feel there can be little real doubt that that used by the Royal Ballet is purer than what the Leningrad dancers showed us at Covent Garden.

Nicolai Sergueeff actually danced in the

first performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* as a boy, and later was one of the *régisseurs* at the Maryinsky while the ballet could still be remembered by many of its original cast. Moreover his memory was aided by the Stepanov score, which most unfortunately is not nowadays available in Russia. Konstantin Sergeyev, on the other hand, did not join the Leningrad Company until 1930, and although the ballet has remained quite consistently in the Leningrad repertory more or less since its first performance, it has undergone many changes and been given many different interpretations — although perhaps not to the same extent as *Swan Lake*.

In fact I suspect that the most "authentic" production of the ballet seen in recent times was that produced by Nicolai Sergueeff for Mona Inglesby's International Ballet in 1948, which despite the limitations of the dancers aimed at accuracy above everything else. The comparison between this version of the choreography and that danced by both the Kirov Ballet and our own Covent Garden company, is both instructive and fascinating. Nowadays in England we have made many departures from the Petipa original, and frequently the Kirov production *is* in fact as well as claim more faithful than our own.

Outstanding among the choreography lost from our own production is Petipa's version of the Garland Dance for a large *corps de ballet* of men, women and children, and here the Kirov version, quite unlike the two arrangements made by Ashton and De Valois for the Royal Ballet, is largely in accordance with what we know from the International Ballet production. The Kirov also use the *pas de quatre* for the Jewel Fairies in the last act, which Ashton has pinched for the Florestan *pas de trois*. The Kirov is also more accurate in its structure, for it properly puts the Awakening Scene at the end of the second act, rather than following the Royal Ballet's bad practice of placing it at the beginning of the third. Then again I imagine the

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY: Four of the fairies in the prologue. This picture gives some idea of the style that is typical of the Kirov school.



Kirov is more traditional in its stage effects, for although most of these were beyond the capabilities of the International Ballet, the magical transformation of an old woman into Carabosse, for example, is certainly authentic and has been described by Balanchine in his *Book of Great Ballets*. Even in small details of the choreography, where we may usually favour the Royal Ballet for authenticity, this is by no means invariably safe. For example in the variation for what we call the Woodland Glades Fairy, the Royal Ballet perform the diagonal series of *arabesques* with a raised leg, whereas the Kirov have the leg on the ground, which looks odd, but is in fact the way Nicolai Sergueeff produced it for International Ballet, and has long since been changed in the Royal Ballet version.

Then again the Kirov production is rather fuller than our own, even though it was cut down for Western consumption. This involved the sad omission of the Panorama (which could not be staged at Covent Garden for technical reasons), the presentation of the Jewel *pas de quatre* in a truncated form minus one variation and its *coda*, the omission of the *coda* to the *grand pas de deux* (used in our production for "the Three Ivans") and the omission of the *pas de caractère* for Cinderella and Prince Fortuné, who are included among the wedding guests, but do not dance their special number. However, the Kirov did include the dance for Hop o' my Thumb and the Ogre, although this, together with the children in the Garland Dance was omitted from the company's last two Covent Garden performances. Despite all this I would still say that on balance our choreography, and here I am speaking just of choreography not production, is still slightly closer the original than the Kirov.

In the Prologue (which the Kirov places in the evening rather than during the day) the variations for the Fairies are by and large quite similar, although the style of dancing adds to their air of difference. A few of them, notably the second and the fifth variation have been gingered up, and yet not unpleasantly so. Some of the *ensemble* dancing is also remarkably similar, thus after the main *divertissement*, the *coda* includes the Lilac Fairy's attendants doing a series of *emboîtés*, except the Kirov do two series with their sixteen, as opposed to our one with eight. Quite a lot of the remainder of the *ensemble* has had to be amended, because the Kirov quite unaccountably leave out the Fairies' cavaliers, which has a distressing effect on the choreography.

Cuts in the first act tend to be common to both — thus the charming dance for the four pages has been jettisoned by both of us. The Kirov version of both the Rose Adagio and Aurora's variation is, give or take a step or two and add the "Lilac Fairy's lift" from the Prologue, identical with our own — but the rest of Aurora's rôle in this act has been considerably amended. I asked a member of the original cast of Diaghilev's *The Sleeping Princess* how these present Kirov dancers compared with Diaghilev's Maryinsky ballerinas. He told me there was something similar in their style, "but, of course, the Maryinsky ballerinas never had this kind of fluid technique, and they certainly couldn't jump like the present generation." The Kirov dancers have the most wonderful jumps, and here Aurora's choreography has, very reasonably, been adapted to exploit this new air-borne facility.



THE SLEEPING BEAUTY: Irina Kolpakova, as Princess Aurora, in the Rose Adagio from Act 1.
Photo: Anthony Crickmay.

In the second act — the Vision Scene — Sergeyev has thrown Petipa completely out of the window, and started from scratch. When one or two Petipa touches come floating to the surface — the choreography for the teasing of Gallison or a tiny fragment of ensemble dancing at the end of the act — these look almost like interpolations. I cannot agree with those of my colleagues who find this new choreography entirely lacking in the Petipa style, yet certainly the style has been modernised, and not always to its advantage. The Countesses Dance has been made into a variation for the Prince (which is not, perhaps, a bad idea, after the initial shock has worn off), and the peasant dance is made into a *pas de six* for a group of musicians. Where Sergeyev's version fails to measure up to the original is in the wonderful, mysterious convolutions Petipa contrived for Aurora's vision, the Lilac Fairy, the Prince and the *corps de ballet*, those interlacing dances full of allure that are among the finest things in Petipa. Why Sergeyev has cut these is puzzling, particularly as when in 1954 the enchanting Kirov ballerina Alla Shelest came to London with her partner, Konstantin Shatilov, they danced excerpts from a Vision Scene that looked remarkably similar to the Royal Ballet's reading of the Petipa.

The choreography of the last act is altogether more sharply accented than our own, more pointful and if less accurate, at least more authoritative. On the whole it strives far less for brilliance, and this is particularly noticeable in the *Grand Pas de Deux*, which does not, for example, include the fish-dives regarded as the highlight of the *pas de deux* in the West, preferring what I believe is the original version of supported pirouettes. Some of the dances, such as Puss-in-Boots and the White Cat are far better produced, although Red Riding Hood is given in a less attractive version. The male Bluebird only

does one diagonal (this, like the omission of the fish-dives, is, I believe, authentic) and both the end of his variation and the *adagio* are given new and very graceful, avian endings.

One big change made between the Royal Ballet's production and the Kirov comes with the Russians' omission of the formal Maryinsky mime. For years we on *Dance and Dancers* have opposed Maryinsky mime, calling it meaningless semaphoring and any other rude phrases we could think of that might eventually influence people to mock this dead language out of the theatre. Now having seen the Kirov *Sleeping Beauty* I am beginning to wonder whether we were right. The Kirov certainly do not find the solution to its substitution.

The big mime crux in the narrative comes, it will be recalled, in the Prologue, when Carabosse first curses Aurora saying she will prick her finger and die on her 16th birthday — changed, incidentally, to 20th on the Kirov programme. The Lilac Fairy commutes this death sentence to the one of sleeping until she is awakened by her Prince's kiss. Now all this was originally conveyed in mime, and the difficulties of putting it into naturalistic gesture have proved insuperable for the Kirov. Carabosse's malediction is expressed — clumsily it may be thought — by having a "flash-forward" vision of a real little girl pricking her finger and falling down — presumably dead. This is not very satisfactory (at one performance a young member of the audience plaintively enquired: "What's happening now, Mummy?"), and what is far worse is that the Kirov failing to think up any naturalistic equivalent for the Lilac Fairy's all-important *riposte* have just amended it to a vague gesture of protection.

Another mime omission is the knitting women at the beginning of Act 1, and then we have the curious incident when the King and Queen smile benignly while Aurora is

given a spindle by the disguised Carabosse. Eventually, to be just, the slightly revised story does fall into place. After Carabosse's curse the King — in a most impressive curtain — banishes spindles from the land. The King and Queen promptly forget about the edict and consequently show no surprise when twenty years later Aurora is handed the strange, forbidden object. Finally the Lilac Fairy comes along in answer to her previous promise, and puts everyone to sleep. It does, however, seem a long way round just to avoid a little mime.

It has been said, frequently and loudly in London, that the Kirov take a less dramatic view of the ballet than we in England. This is largely true, but it needs very careful amplification. Dramatically Sergeyev's production is far sounder, more consistent and more convincing than the Royal Ballet's, but Sergeyev has placed the drama into the background of the ballet, using it merely as a frame for the dancers. In this, we may be sure, the Kirov approach differs from the Bolshoi, and although we have never seen the Bolshoi *Sleeping Beauty*, the excerpt, choreographed by Messerer, of the Rose Adagio given in the Bolshoi's Croydon *divertissement* programme was loaded down rather tastelessly with "human interest" and was as different in spirit, and often in choreography, from the Kirov version as chalk is from cheese.

Yet while the drama is subordinated to the dancing, it is full of style, and has a quality of period feeling that completely outclasses our own. One only has to consider the treatment of Catalabutte, the King and Queen, the four Princes, the delicious lightly-sketched detail of the

Awakening Scene, even the way in which the Prince is the static onlooker to Aurora's "Vision" solo, or even such a small thing as the manner, in the Prologue, each Fairy ceremoniously bestows her blessing upon the infant princess before dancing her solo — to realise that a very great deal of thought has gone into the production. But the dancing is the thing.

Although the smaller rôles are carefully produced, the principals are given very little in the way of what we would call characterisation, their expressiveness being expected to emerge almost completely just from their dancing. Such an approach is bound to seem somewhat strange to us, yet I must say I thought it worked most wonderfully well.

C. B.

DANCING — The Kirov Ballet's *Sleeping Beauty* is a superb, stylish vehicle for dancing, and what incredible dancing it carried! The season saw three Auroras — Irina Kolpakova, Xenia Ter-Stepanova and (dancing the rôle for the first time anywhere) Alla Sizova. Kolpakova was slightly cold, and her acting had been reduced to the barest of minimums, and that is just about the worst you can say of her. Technically her dancing amazed with its faultless flow, marvellous proportions and musicality. There is a crystalline purity about her which seems to radiate light more than merely glitter, and her elevation was often sensational — in the first act she executed a series of jumps in which she seemed positively to float across the stage.

Ter-Stepanova, rather nervous on her first performance but warming up for her second, showed fine attack, a more than

reasonable elevation, the usual elegant schooling, and a most remarkable facility for any kind of turns. Her supported *pirouettes* in the last act *pas de deux* were the best I have ever seen. On the other hand she made hardly any more effort at the interpretation of the part than did Kolpakova, and her lack of any very distinctive individuality made it difficult for her to project to the audience. This was a pity, as she is a fine dancer with a particular classic elegance in her reticently straight back and imperious *épaulement*.

The immensely popular Alla Sizova made an Aurora rather more to the English taste than her colleagues. Her inexperience in the rôle meant that her portrayal — and unlike the other two it really was a portrayal — was tentative in parts, but here was all the incipient nobility of a coming *prima ballerina*. Her extensions seemed to travel up to infinity and beyond in a curiously poetic and non-athletic manner, while her *arabesques penchées* in the Vision Scene were a joy to behold. She had better balances than her colleagues, and in the Rose Adagio she was the only one of the trio to raise her arms *en couronne* during the unsupported *attitudes*. Her dancing was also warmer than the other two Auroras, and for all its spaciousness and exultance there was an emotional colouring of tenderness here that made her performance charm as much as excite. I find it difficult to envisage a more remarkable début in the greatest ballerina rôle of the classic repertory.

The three Auroras had two Princes — Vladilen Semenov and Oleg Sokolov. Semenov, reliable, unassuming, punctiliously correct, once again made up for what he lacked in vigour of personality with

THE SLEEPING BEAUTY: The "Vision scene" with Kolpakova as the vision of Princess Aurora and Vladilen Semenov as Prince Desire.

Photo: Anthony Crickmay.



his artistry and amiable bearing. For all his academic virtues he nevertheless misses something in theatricality, and time and time again during the season we saw his excellently schooled dancing fail to catch fire, and his often perceptively shaded characterisation become lost against the general background.

No one on the other hand could fail to overlook Oleg Sokolov, a brash assertive Prince with a mind of his own, and agreeably extroverted in a manner reminiscent of David Blair. At the beginning of the season, when I think he was completely new to the rôle, this young dancer impressed more by the confidence of his bearing than with his actual dancing. Yet by the end of the season the rare panache of his dancing and its buoyancy overrode his few technical failings, such as hunching the shoulders slightly and slipping out of the perpendicular in air turns. His partnering, however, still requires a good deal of polishing, and Sizova could perhaps have received more help at her début.

The Bluebird *pas de deux* had a couple of oddly contrasted duos, the one ranking among the best London has ever seen in the rôles, the other being very ordinary indeed. Yuri Soloviev is that rare thing, a truly beautiful male dancer. His line is exceptional, and he never loses the breathtaking shape of his movements even when high in the air, while his transitional movements from one step to the next are so bewilderingly perfect that his dancing has an almost uncanny, seamless quality to it. This is the sort of dancer Russia has never sent us before (from accounts Nureyev may have been another) and his success was instantaneous. He showed the soft virility of an Eglevsky, combined with the classic manner of a Bruhn, and he made a most remarkably fine Bluebird.

His partner, Alla Sizova, is described as Princess Florine on the programme, though typically there was little in the production that indicated an "enchanted Princess". But if Sizova did not look enchanted, she was at least enchanting and her crisp, spirited dancing made her a worthy match for Soloviev.

I fear I did not take to Olga Moiseyeva's over-arch and overbearing manner as the Princess Florine, and although her technique was strong and her schooling noble if exaggerated, her bravura seemed over-forced. Sergei Vikulov, her partner, proved a rather uncouth although enthusiastic classicist. His back was too often tense, his feet were too often unpointed, and his manner far too obviously athletic. He probably needs experience, as he was not scheduled to dance Bluebird in London, and only appeared because Nureyev's unfortunate defection meant that Sokolov had to switch from this rôle to the Prince.

Inna Zubkovskaya's Lilac Fairy reminded me of Vyrubova — she had much of the same Franco-Russian charm and *chic*. Enormously elegant rather than authoritative and hardly characterised at all, her performance was full of Fairy Bountiful radiance and was vividly danced. She sustained her very difficult variation right to the end, and as with so many of these dancers, her broad but completely unaffected *épaulement* was notable.

The other Lilac Fairy, Alla Osipenko, had slightly less ballerina-allure and somewhat more ballerina-authority. She seemed to bring some sense of character to the rôle, and her dancing with its high extensions and sure balances was marked out by its fluidity and control. This was perhaps the best thing Osipenko did in London, and



THE SLEEPING BEAUTY: Above, the Silver, Sapphire and Golden Fairies (Komleva, Korneyeva and Gruzdyeva) in the last act. Below, The Bluebird (Yuri Soloviev) and Princess Florine (Alla Sizova) in the famous pas de deux from the last act.

Photos: Anthony Crickmay.





THE SLEEPING BEAUTY: Kolpakova, as Princess Aurora, and Semenov, as Prince Désiré in the last act of *The Sleeping Beauty*.
Photo: Anthony Crickmay.

revealed her to be a dancer with the very greatest potential.

The other five Fairies danced unchanged throughout the season, although this invariable cast was given a touch of mystery by the Covent Garden programme which consistently transposed the names of Ludmilla Alexeyeva, who danced the fourth variation with Galina Ivanova (listed among the principals under her married name of Galina Stupnikova) who danced the fifth. As the Kirov company has produced yet more new names for these Fairies, I will restrict myself to numbers and praise the gentle dancing of Natalia Makarova as Fairy No. 1, the bouyancy of Gabriella Komleva as No. 2, the piquancy of Galina Kekisheva as No. 3, the spirited dancing of Alexeyeva as No. 4, and the commanding but perhaps occasionally over-forceful style of Ivanova as No. 5.

Ivanova also had some exceptional moments leading the Fairies' *pas de quatre* in the last act. She is a dancer of great individuality, with a curiously thrusting style and unusual brio, but a tendency to split her dance phrases into jerky fragments. The other three Fairies — Sapphire, Gold and Silver — were performed with sweeping vigour by Inna Korneyeva, Nina Gruzdyeva and Komleva. Also in the last act was the most attractive White Cat and Puss-in-Boots we have ever seen, with Kekisheva a model of purring, spitting coquetry, and Oleg Kuznetsov as her long-suffering Tom, full of male ego and complacent swagger. Tamara Issakova made a sweet little Red-Riding Hood, slightly more assured than the alternative cast, Marina Cherednichenko, and both were chased enthusiastically by the ballet-master Takhir Baltacheyev, as the Wolf.

The mime rôles were unobtrusively, yet imaginatively, played. Konstantin Shatilov, wearing an excellent make-up, was extremely good in the first act, but in the Prologue, although his smiling and menacing characterisation was well conceived, it could have done with a touch more of venom. Igor Chernishev and Iraida Utretskaya had dignity as the King and Queen, even if they were perhaps a shade too bland for the Sun King and his

wife, seeming far more like constitutional monarchs than despots. Yuri Miachin fussed excellently as Catalabutte, and in this production he had been given an assistant in the shape of the equally fussy Khashim Mustayev as someone called Galifron. Among the Princess's four stalwart Suitors, the first Prince Sergei Vikulov was outstanding, giving the rôle a fine sense of character and panache.

C. B.

DECOR — If I was none too enthusiastic about what Simon Virsaladze did for *The Stone Flower*, I found that most of his work for *The Sleeping Beauty* very good indeed. There is a great truth about his designing of 19th-century classics. In many ways the settings bore a resemblance to what Léon Bakst did for Diaghilev's production of this ballet and to a certain extent they invite comparison. There was the same opulence in conception — towering palaces and lush vistas and the same regard for the content of Tchaikovsky's baroque score. Where the vast gap lies between the former and present Russian designer was in dramatic use of colour, minute attention to architectural and costume detail and use of material and the ability to eliminate.

In Virsaladze's setting for the prologue he showed a Bakst-sense of dramatic colour. The palace in this christening scene was designed to follow out the colour and decoration of the auditorium in the Kirov Theatre so that in fact the curtain opened on one vast palace — a splendid idea. That this effect was not achieved at Covent Garden was only natural but what we saw was impressive enough. The deep blue of the columns was reflected in the costumes for the court and they all formed a framework for the lighter colours of the fairies — mauve, pink, tangerine and so on. I very much liked the simplicity of their costumes and I am getting to like these Russian tutus in general. It was also a good idea to frame the whole ballet in vast gates of wrought iron which opened and closed at the beginning and ending of each act so that each act became a chapter

in Perrault's story — never have I seen "once upon a time" so graphically explained without words.

Out into the open for the first act and we got one of Virsaladze's misty al fresco scenes (this and scenes in similar environments from other ballets cause me to think that Watteau and Corot are his masters). His arboreal and shrubby treatment is soft — like olive trees — and his palace is only vaguely discerned through them. Against this the costumes should have been less indeterminate as dusty pastels gave the whole act a smudged air.

On to the vision scene and autumnal vistas which would have been charming if only they had been lit with greater imagination. Here again the costumes were too uninteresting in colour to create the effect that could, with such slight alteration, have been achieved. The boat journey to the "Panorama" music was, sadly, omitted at Covent Garden — in Leningrad, I understand, this takes place against a huge moving cloth. A scene showing Carabosse working her spells while the Princess sleeps her century out, was well designed. This opens on to the Princess's bedroom and the awakening, and somehow there was a falling-off here. The room never really belonged to the palace of the opening scenes.

The final act for the wedding celebrations of Aurora, took place in what to me looked like a superior town hall — remarkably uninteresting and far too symmetrical.

Frankly it is difficult to pass judgment on the designing of this ballet as a whole. It was so obviously designed for a much larger stage and probably never intended to tour. I am positive that at the Kirov with its greater depth, many of the faults that were noticed at Covent Garden would not exist. The fact remains that basically the designing was apt and provided the opulent surround that this ballet demands. The one serious fault as far as the costumes are concerned lies in the material used — there is far too much shiny satin and flimsy fabric which causes costumes to "move" too quickly and thus give a feeling of poverty. I don't mean that the costumes should be weighed down with clutter and

chi-chi as is so often seen in the West but that in certain costumes, such as for courtiers and so on, there should be greater substance.

It would seem that Virsaladze's principal aim is that nothing shall hamper the dance and its patterns and this I find wholly admirable.

P. W.

Giselle

First given at Covent Garden on June 23, 1961.

CHOREOGRAPHY AND PRODUCTION

— With a modest fidelity that does them much credit, the ballet masters of the world always punctiliously ascribe *Giselle* to Jean Coralli and Jules Perrot, and the Kirov Ballet follow this admirable convention. Yet I wonder how much Coralli and Perrot is left in all of our productions. There is scarcely a ballet company in the world that has not got *Giselle* in its repertory, and the similarities between each and every one of them are remarkable. But I personally cannot think of any of them that did not at one time stem from Petipa's Maryinsky production, or rather productions, for he made a number of revisions to the ballet throughout his career.

The first Russian *Giselle* to be seen in St. Petersburg was a pirated version made by the German ballet master Titus, and first given in 1842 for the ballerina Elena Andreyanova. Perrot himself produced the ballet in St. Petersburg in 1851, and later Petipa produced an important revision on October 8 1860 (included in the Petipa check list based on that by D. Leskoff, printed in the Slonimsky/Chujoy *Dance Index* on Petipa). According to Serge Lifar (*Giselle—Apothéose du Ballet Romantique*) Petipa made further extensive alterations between February 5 1884 and April 12 1887 and this is confirmed by Cyril Beaumont in *The Ballet Called Giselle*. The present souvenir programme produced by the Kirov Company for their Covent Garden season mentions an 1899 Petipa revival, which is possible — it would have been the first year of Volkonski's brief régime at the Maryinsky, and a number of changes do seem to have been made in the repertory at that time — yet I have never come across any other mention of an 1899 production, and it could be that this is just one of those vague statements that find their way into souvenir programmes the world over.

No one will ever now know precisely to what extent Petipa changed the original ballet, but the point must be made that *Giselle* as it now stands is almost as much a "Maryinsky" ballet as *Swan Lake* or *The Sleeping Beauty*. The present Kirov production has been revised by Konstantin Sergeyev, and it is a distinct disappointment in comparison with his sensitive versions of the two Tchaikovsky ballets.

As in all their productions of 19th-century works shown in London, the Kirov company place the accent very firmly on the dancing. In the Tchaikovsky ballets this unquestionably works to their advantage, but in the dance-drama of *Giselle* it results in much of the drama being treated in a most cavalier fashion. Dramatically this was in total neither much better nor much worse than the Royal Ballet's production, and the disparity between both of them and Lavrovsky's production for the Bolshoi Ballet seemed equally large.

Unlike Lavrovsky, Sergeyev is here quite unable to place any particularly positive

theme upon *Giselle*, and the principal characters remain unconvincing lay figures. Although, as in *The Sleeping Beauty*, the drama of the piece has been dismissed to the background, whereas the details of *The Sleeping Beauty* were tellingly convincing, even if understressed, the details of *Giselle* provide a network of illogicalities, giving the production in its overall effect a strangely casual air.

The stories of both *The Sleeping Beauty* and *Swan Lake* have, by and large, the qualities of a myth, and their drama is, to a very large part, symbolic. In both of these Sergeyev goes through the motions of drama, as it were, just enough to provoke the right emotional response, yet at the same time ensuring that the narrative at no time swamps the dancing. This same technique, or one distressingly similar, proves

GISELLE REHEARSAL: Irina Kolpakova rehearses the second act.

Photo: Anthony Crickmay.





SWAN LAKE: *The pas de trois from Act I with Alla Sizova, Vassili Ivanov and Xenia Ter-Stepanova against the new décor designed by Simon Virsaladze.*

nigh-on disastrous for *Giselle*, where the whole treatment needs to be far more realistic. We have to believe in *Giselle* and Albrecht on a quite different level from the belief we give to Aurora or even Odette/Odile, and Sergeyev is unable to sustain our belief with these two-dimensional sketches of what need to be fully rounded characters.

As only two months ago I discussed in some detail what I felt to be the shortcomings of the Royal Ballet's recent new production of *Giselle*, I have neither the inclination nor appetite to deal with this Kirov version in the same detail, particularly when quite a few of the faults are common to both, as, for example, the clumsy handling of the scene where *Giselle* tests Albrecht's love with a flower, and the introduction of the peasant *pas de deux* as a sort of extraneous village cabaret turn. Some of the Kirov production in this first act is extraordinarily perfunctory — for example, when a *fully-laid* table is produced from Berthe's cottage for the refreshment of the Hunting Party, and the manner in which Albrecht's house (seemingly a vast baronial mansion incidentally) would appear to be fitted with a self-closing lock so that Albrecht can lock himself out at a vital stage in the proceedings.

It is, perhaps of some interest that Sergeyev has re-introduced the procession of Bacchus, unknown in the West, yet this is done so half-heartedly as to be hardly noticeable, and the more important crowning of *Giselle* as Queen of the Vintage is completely omitted. *Giselle* is actually shown to have a weak heart, which is an advantage over our version, but the final tableau of this act does not include Albrecht and is extremely badly composed in its groupings.

The Hunting Party is fairly well directed, but their disdainful lack of interest in the plight of *Giselle*, while possibly accurately reflecting the general attitude of medieval nobility to peasants, quite fails to take account of the natural curiosity they would of necessity feel over this particular peasant girl who has been caught in a compromising situation with Albrecht.

Some of the minor characters are well conceived — notably Wilfred, whose scenes are played *à la* Bolshoi, the Duke and Bathilde — but the treatment of Hilarion (here called Hans for some inscrutable reason) is bungled. Clearly, as Lavrovsky and nowadays the Royal Ballet realise, Hilarion must elicit our sympathy for the ballet to make sense to modern audiences, and Albrecht has to be cast for the rôle of the thoughtless villain. Yet this interpretation can run against the spirit of the music as it is Hilarion who has been allotted the fee-fie-foe-fum stuff in the score. With tact, by making Hilarion a bluff and hearty villager, simple and impetuous, this disparity can be avoided. Sergeyev, however, has made Hilarion so full of sweetness and light, such a milksop, that the interpretation becomes almost absurd in relationship to the music.

The choreography in the first act sticks very closely to the Petipa original, and is virtually identical to the Royal Ballet's version. The peasant *pas de deux* varies somewhat, although both the Kirov and the Royal Ballet omit the *coda* to the first male variation. The girl's first variation is new to London, and appallingly out of style. Like Covent Garden they have dropped the original Burgmüller music, but whereas we have substituted Adam's original variation for *Giselle*, the Kirov have gone one worse by interpolating a piece of music by a composer unknown, who sounds like Drigo. Musically this addition might just possibly have been made by Petipa — although I strongly doubt it — but choreographically it is a typical Soviet-style variation designed to show off the ballerina's elevation, and is years out of period.

Musically this first act includes little more of Adam's score than does the Royal Ballet version, although it does restore a cut on the entrance of the hunting party; on the other hand, it omits Berthe's Narration. The second act, which uses the same musical ending as the Bolshoi, restores a very pleasant piece of music after the first encounter of Albrecht with the will *Giselle*. Otherwise, here again both the British and Leningrad versions are music-

ally remarkably similar. However, whereas the choreography and production of the first act bears a strong resemblance to the Royal Ballet's, in the second act the Kirov version moves much closer towards the Bolshoi, and this is all to its advantage.

The lukewarm ending with Albrecht collapsed over the tomb as if in prayer, at least avoids the Royal Ballet's knockabout farce of a last-minute reconciliation with Bathilde, but does not come that much closer to the poetic sensibility of Lavrovsky's conception, whereby Albrecht is regenerated by the purifying force of love.

On the debit side of this second act must be placed the ice-cold indifference of Myrthe, who is given an almost abstract reading, in place of her proper malevolence. Also, and this is where I think the Bolshoi equally err, Sergeyev is somewhat too liberal with his flowers, strewing them around the act with almost careless abandon. I rather liked, however, his idea of having *Giselle* offer Myrthe some flowers as a peace offering. This was a sweet and original touch. Another good touch came at the end when Wilfred, a very solicitous Wilfred, with a neatly defined relationship to his master, came searching in the woods for Albrecht, carrying his cloak. I also liked some of the stage effects, although the will o' the wisps, giant penny sparklers on sticks manipulated by occasionally visible stage hands in the wings, seemed ridiculous, while *Giselle*'s career across the back of the set mounted on a trolley, looked forced to say the least.

Although the appearance and disappearance of *Giselle* from her tomb was not well handled, I suspect that this was due to Covent Garden being unable to provide a trap door in the downstage O. P. corner, under the tomb, for I noticed that the tomb itself had a trap in it. Incidentally, it seems rather parochial for Russian productions to have *Giselle*'s name on the tomb written in the Cyrillic script, which is as absurd as it would be for us to use English lettering on the booths in *Petrushka*.

It is good to see Hilarion given a reasonable dance of death, which is the only convincing way of handling this episode.

Choreographically this second act differs

quite a bit from our own in some of its smaller details. Some changes appear to be somewhat arbitrary and ill-advised. For example, Albrecht, in the first entrance of his dance of exhaustion following his variation, substitutes a series of *brisés volés* for the more usual double *cabrioles*, the *brisés* being much more small-scale and not nearly so expressive of growing desperation as the far more dramatic *cabriole* entry. On the other hand, the ending of his variation, on one knee, with his hands outstretched to the cross in supplication, may well be thought preferable to the sack-of-coals collapse found in all Western versions. Giselle's part is choreographically much the same as with us — even to the bad habit of throwing her flowers to Albrecht after the apex of her jump — but I was horrified to see her break the line of wilis to give herself a run at one of the diagonals.

The Kirov's typical classical restraint makes this a cold second act, lacking something in passion and emotional climax, yet this treatment suits the wili scene far better than the realistic first act, and towards the end of the ballet Sergeyev achieved a most beautiful span of elegiac dancing which momentarily raises the production way above itself.

The only thing that might have made this production, despite all its dramatic flaws, something more than a very ordinary, workaday *Giselle*, could have been a heightened sense of period style, such as we can descry in Marie Rambert's treat-

ment. Yet, unhappily, period style is almost completely lacking and my advice to the Kirov must reluctantly be the same as my advice to the Royal Ballet, namely, bring in Lavrovsky. After all, he originally came from Leningrad.

C. B.

DANCING — Irina Kolpakova, sweet, lovely Kolpakova, is not a great Giselle, and one idly wonders how the production would have looked had she been that always rare creature. Still conjecture will get us nowhere, and within the limitations of her temperament she gave an attractive performance. Her acting, however, was quite lacking in light and shade, everything being pitched on the same emotional key. Kolpakova started on a note of somewhat hectic gaiety, which was only broken by a softly played mad scene through which she wandered as disconsolately as a child who has broken a favourite toy. She chose, very wisely, to place her entire interpretation in the second act upon her eloquent dancing, and quite legitimately added hardly anything to it by way of facial expression.

Her dancing throughout was extremely good, and often brilliant. Her lightness, elevation and superlative style made her second act memorable, as dancing such as this can stand by itself. What Kolpakova lacks, and, for that matter, what the production as a whole lacks, was any sense of involvement with the tragedy. It was a detached performance in a detached production, and could consequently never

attempt to scale the heights of poetry.

Semenov as Albrecht proved to be almost Kolpakova's precise counterpart. Dramatically small-scale, and fundamentally unconvincing, he danced well and throughout revealed the natural bearing of the true *premier danseur*. It would be true, I think, to say that his portrayal was essentially superficial and unmotivated, and I feel he could have made more both dramatically and choreographically of Albrecht's ever-increasing exhaustion in the second act. Yet like our own Royal Ballet Albrechts, Semenov was ham-strung from the start by the limitations of the production.

It was also Semenov who partnered the season's only other Giselle, young Natalia Makarova, making what I believe was her actual début in the rôle. A tender and appealing dancer, with one of the loveliest natural lines I have ever seen, Makarova's immaturity and innocence gave her portrayal a touching poignancy. Her acting, at present a shade on the careful side, held the promise of a spontaneity to come, while her beautifully phrased dancing could well develop into something even more exciting than it is at present. She obviously has a very considerable talent, and I consider it a privilege to have been present at her début. Semenov made her a most helpful partner, and seemed to assist her at every turn of the game, appearing to show a particular pride in his young *débutante*.

In this production Hilarion (or Hans, if you will have it so) is not a very easy

SWAN LAKE: Vladilen Semenov, as Prince Siegfried, and Inna Zubkovskaya as Odette, in the second act of *Swan Lake* in which they appeared on the Kirov's first London performance of the ballet on June 30.





SWAN LAKE: The corps de ballet in the second act of the Petipa/Ivanov ballet which has been revised by Konstantin Sergeyev.

character to play, and it should perhaps not go too hardy with Konstantin Shatilov that he met with a conspicuous lack of success in overcoming his difficulties. Khashim Mustayev was, of course, up against the same problems, although his more powerful bearing in fact gave him an appreciable advantage, which he turned to good account. He showed a natural friendly dignity and made, I should say, the very best out of the extremely limited possibilities of the rôle. He even brought a certain limited credibility to a scene perilously close to farce, when he has to jump in and out of a window with the agility of a cat-burglar.

Of the remaining principal, Inna Korneyeva, as Myrthe, it is really impossible

to say more than that she danced well, with light jumps, interesting, yet restrained, *epaulement*, and noteworthy *ballon*. As the production did not seem to permit any interpretation from her, it is not possible to comment on this consequently non-existent aspect of her performance.

Undoubtedly the honours of these *Giselle* performances, so far as the Covent Garden audience were concerned, went to the dancers of the Peasant Pas de Deux, Xenia Ter-Stepanova with either Yuri Soloviev or Oleg Sokolov. Ter-Stepanova's remarkably accurate and exciting turns, together with her beautifully complete finish, were altogether admirable, yet it was the high-soaring, brilliant Soloviev who attracted most attention. His second variation in

particular was given with an almost impudent ease and a characteristic mixture of grace and *panache*, which together with his impeccable style numbers him among the finest male dancers seen in Britain since the war. Sokolov, by any normal standards, was very good indeed, but Soloviev on his Covent Garden form hardly represented fair competition.

To my mind the best individual portrayal in all these performances was Yuri Miachin's Duke, which was one of the finest pieces of characterisation the season produced. Here was playing of immense authority and power, absolutely naturalistic, without a gesture out of place and totally unforced. On an only slightly lower level came Yevgeni Ivanov's sympathetic Wilfred, and the imperious Bathilde of Illaria Lentovskaya. I especially liked the way she chucked *Giselle* under the chin with her riding-crop, which was an imaginative touch from the producer, admirably taken by the actress. Both of the Berthes, Iraida Utretskaya and Victoria Potemkina were made credibly young enough to have a teenage daughter, in contrast to some of the aged crones one still occasionally sees in Western productions, yet were otherwise unremarkable. Galina Ivanova and particularly Ludmilla Alexeyeva danced well accented and musical solos as Zulma and Moyna — and to dance musically to the conducting of Vadim Kalentiev was no mean achievement.

C. B.

DECOR — Of the four full-length ballets given during the Kirov season in London, the only one not to be designed by Simon Virsaladze was *Giselle*. It was attributed to Ivanov and Bocharov and I am at a loss to know their period. I don't know whether the designs were a fairly recent *pastiche* of the period or whether they were old designs dating back to the beginning of the century. But whichever way you looked at them they were bad.

Old settings, such as Covent Garden raked-up for their production of *La Boheme* or what can be seen in the Bournonville ballets in Copenhagen, usually have tremendous charm if they are well lit. These unfortunately were singularly charmless and for the life of me I could not tell in what country the ballet was supposed to take place.

The origin of the Wili legend is Slavonic and Gautier who based his scenario on Heine refers to the Harz Mountains and German moonlight, so it would seem that the correct environment for the ballet lay somewhere around the regions of central Europe. Yet in the Kirov production, the first backcloth shows a vista of somewhere that looked for all the world like the cypress-studded plain of Lombardy. A fact that was emphasised by the second act which had the appearance of every Italian graveyard you ever thought of — monumental tombs and more cypresses. Yet some of the architecture in the first act might have come from anywhere and it seemed odd that the cottage of *Giselle*'s family should have been placed opposite a rather palatial mansion which seemed a curious place for Albrecht to hide his princely paraphernalia. The programme makes repeated references to Albrecht's "cottage" and if this is a welfare state's idea of what a humble cottage is like then I've got mixed up somewhere.

In the second act, *Giselle*'s grave is placed in a very awkward position downstage on the O.P. side — it dominated the scene and made the entrances and exits for *Giselle* look clumsy. There are of course various schools of thought about

SWAN LAKE: The Spanish dance from the divertissement in Act 3, with Elena Petrova, Murat Kumisnikov, Anatoli Sapogov and Irina Gensler.

Photo: Anthony Crickmay.



the position of this grave and all productions of the ballet by Anton Dolin keep it in the same position as do the Kirov — others place it right up-stage. I feel, however, that the floor-pattern of the choreography is more directed to the up-stage position, particularly when Giselle and Albrecht run up-stage to seek protection from the cross as Myrthe tries to weave her spells.

Anyway, from a design point of view, the Kirov production is a muddle and both acts look to me like those various sets of scenery that can be hired for amateur productions and are referred to in the catalogue as "open landscape with architectural details" or "graveyard scene suitable for *Don Giovanni* or *Lucia di Lammermoor*". There seemed no unity anywhere other than that of all-over drabness.

Nor were the costumes any more distinguished, and looked as though they had been gathered from the theatre wardrobe more or less at random.

All this was very sad because the production from the Bolshoi has been so excellent. Somehow I had hoped that the theatre which has given the world the greatest Giselles of this century would have shown us something better than this. It's time, I would think, that Simon Virsaladze, who designed the other classics and who recently re-designed a splendid *Swan Lake* (about which I shall write next month), got weaving on this ballet also.

P. W.

MUSIC FOR THE KIROV

by NOËL GOODWIN

PROKOFIEV died in 1953, and *The Stone Flower* was one of his last works. Its date is uncertain. Richard Anthony Leonard, in his *History of Russian Music*, states bluntly that it was composed in 1949-50, which seems rather early. However, I have reason to think that it was revised to some extent either before

the composer's death, or afterwards by another hand. Even the piano score published in Moscow in 1956, which is the only one I have seen, differs in a number of points from the version performed at Covent Garden. Most notably, it does not include the climatic *pas de deux* for Danila and the Mistress of the Copper Mountain, besides being divided into four acts instead of two.

Pending detailed research, if ever that becomes possible, Prokofiev's later years will remain shrouded in mystery for us. Leaving aside the vexed question of political interference with Soviet composers in the 1940's, the music of *The Stone Flower* is depressingly feeble for a composer of Prokofiev's earlier stature. Routine melodic phrases in four, eight or sixteen bars, square-cut rhythms and the plainest of harmonies are employed, knit together by suitably "characteristic" themes of diatonic fustian for the principals and the regulation *maestoso* apotheosis at the end. Seldom has a brilliant talent faded out with such a whimper.

It may be significant that at least two dances revert to movements from Prokofiev's *Children's Suite* (Op. 65) for piano, written in 1935. One is the "lyrical scene" for Katerina and Danila in scene two, which is Op. 65, No. 11, *Le Soir*, and the other is the Waltz of the Crystal Stones in scene four, so reminiscent of *Cinderella* but in fact an extension of the *Valse*, Op. 65, No. 6. The most extended and musically the best sequence in the ballet is the Fairground Scene, described as a "Ural Rhapsody". Even that, after its promising start in five-four rhythm, soon settles down to square phrases in a ponderous two-two or two-four. I liked, however, the dignity and controlled abandon of the gypsy dances here, echoing the Magyar form of *lassu* and *fris*.

The music should surely not have presented much of a problem for the Covent Garden orchestra, unlike *Ondine*

for the Russian musicians accompanying the Royal Ballet. But on the first night *The Stone Flower* sounded lacking in warmth of tone from the strings, and in precision of *ensemble* among the woodwind and brass. Nor were these features much improved at the fourth performance. Niazi, the Azerbaijanian principal conductor, made an incomparably better impression than Vadim Kalentiev, whose conducting of *Giselle* was alarmingly weak in phrasing and sluggish in rhythm. I was afraid the *Giselle-Albrecht pas de deux* in the second act would disintegrate altogether, but this, like much else, was due to the peculiar dance-conception of the ballet.

In *Swan Lake* Kalentiev mostly alternated between a brisk gabble, as in the very first *ensemble* and the wholly characterless mazurka of the third act, and a kind of laggard plodding, often changing gear in mid-phrase. It was not even well-matched to the dancing in many places, and it made a jellyfish of Tchaikovsky. Only the Spanish dance had something like real bite and character. For me the most rewarding performance was *The Sleeping Beauty* under Niazi. With a conception so much more lyrical than what we are accustomed to, the moderate tempi and gracious and sensitive phrasing made it a delight to hear as well as to watch. Moreover, it found the orchestra at its most responsive, and the instrumental solos were finely played. Before it was half over I was so entranced that I gave up trying to dissociate music from spectacle.

SWAN LAKE and the GALA PROGRAMME

Owing to lack of space we have been unable to include reviews of *Swan Lake* and *The Gala Programme* in this issue. These will appear next month together with a number of new photographs.

TARAS BULBA REHEARSAL: Male dancers of the company rehearse the excerpts from *Taras Bulba* which formed the last part of the "Gala Performance" and which was awarded a 40 minute ovation at Covent Garden. This programme will be reviewed next month.

Photo: Anthony Crickmay.



Dancing Renoirs for the Nation

by MARIO AMAYA

OF the 6,000 pictures Renoir painted in his lifetime, few were dedicated to the dance. Even if the Impressionist master did turn his attention every so often to the *bals populaires*, it was more to tell a romantic story or capture a pretty moment than to analyse shrewdly the movement of the dancers. But, despite himself, Renoir had an instinctive feeling for rhythm and he could grasp in an instant the essence of limbs in motion, the weightless

swing of flowing bodies and the muscular tension of controlled abandon.

Renoir was no intellectual. The porcelain-painter turned fine-artist believed, as he put it, that "the simplest subjects are eternal." Human beings were the centre of his universe and happy human beings the summation of his art. Thus his waltzing couples, lost in a world of pleasure, could transmit the sheer joy of living through Renoir's passionate naturalism, his shimmering touch and — most of all — his tenderness.

The ball at the *Moulin de la Galette* done in 1876 is directly in the stream of Impressionist painting, with luminous patches of

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sunlight dappling both dancers and revellers, but it is something else as well. Call it a hymn, if you like, to the happiness of humanity. The *Dance at Bougival*, done seven years later after the artist had returned from his Italian travels, has more organisation and anecdote, but there still exists that irrepressible gaiety and serene contentment in just being alive.

Portraits of performers display another facet of Renoir's attitude to the dancer. The *Danseuse* of 1874 and the penetrating study of Rosita Mauri in *La Farandole* (1883) reveal the artist's full sensibilities. The bodies of these dancers are a thing apart — exquisite instruments to be given over at will to feats of beauty and virtuosity. In Renoir's own words, they "palpitate with life."

DANCER WITH TAMBOURINE: *Left, the painting by Pierre Auguste Renoir, done in 1909, as one of a pair of decorative panels.*

Below, A preliminary sketch by Renoir for the Dancer with Tambourine.



The *Dancer with Castanets* and the *Dancer with Tambourine*, which the National Gallery recently purchased for the nation, have little, if anything, in common with these earlier works. Bought mainly to fill the gap in Impressionist pictures, caused by the removal to Ireland of the Lane Collection, the two *Dancers* are of a late period, done in 1909. They were commissioned from one of the artist's most faithful patrons, M. Maurice Gangnat and originally faced each other across a mirror on either side of a chimney-piece in the collector's small Paris dining-room.

The *Dancers* are overpowering works, both in size and in conception, but, alas, they are not altogether successful. For one thing, there is a confusion of style in the ad-hoc mixture of romantic Algerian nostalgia and classic monumentality; if Renoir wanted to achieve figures of sculptural solidity then why dissipate the strength of his modelling with so many fussy details? Also, the dynamic brushstrokes seem less a mastery over materials than a facile slickness of technique. The riot of acidulous colours are bizarre to the extent of cancelling each other out. Moreover, the panels are overcrowded with the dancers pushed to the foreground and no space or depth for them to breathe in — let alone to dance.

Above all, these girls are simply not dancers. The light, easy rhythmic sense, the feeling for natural movements, the suppleness of the body in Renoir's earlier dance subjects has vanished. In its place are rhetorical attitudes and ponderous motions. The bodies are now dead weights, heavy and lethargic, performing with trapped gestures.

The *Dancer with Castanets* would find it difficult to make any sound since she is grasping the instruments in an impossible way. And although castanets are used by a dancer to keep time while in motion, this model shows a stubborn determination not to budge an inch from her posed position. The *Dancer with a Tambourine* holds her instrument as if it were a frying pan. She stands torpid and inert, perhaps wondering herself what she is supposed to be doing. The heavy draperies of the harem costumes, some pieces of which were souvenirs of Renoir's Algerian trip, are inordinately cumbersome, besides looking like props from a theatrical trunk.

How Renoir came to do these ungainly creatures remains a mystery. We know from several Renoir drawings of dancers holding tambourines that the original idea of the panels was in a classical idiom. In this first state, the dancer was conceived in terms of a delicate S-shaped curve, emphasising the flow of her body in terms of the movements. Like Loie Fuller who was performing in Paris at the time, she is clothed in nothing but the most diaphanous classical draperies, which billow out to emphasise her rhythm. Behind her are columns, capitals and architrave, sketched in lightly, adding a sense of depth which suggests the space needed by a figure in motion. This "classical" conception underlines Renoir's later dependence on antique sculpture and a growing interest in traditional French works of art. This was to culminate in the *Judgement of Paris*, done in 1908 and the *Dancer with Castanets* derives from the figure on the extreme right of that picture. The left arm, instead of the right, is raised and the body is turned slightly more inward. Both figures bear a striking resemblance to a Clodion terra-cotta of a *Nymph* in the Rothschild collection at Waddesdon.

Algerian paraphernalia was a favourite with Renoir ever since he had become enamoured of Delacroix. When he was a student at Gleyre's studio, he copied Delacroix pictures and in 1870 painted an *Odalisque* (*Femme d'Alger*) based on the older master. Two years later he painted *Parisians Dressed as Algerians* and in 1879 he finally went to Algiers himself. From Delacroix, Renoir developed his bright, vivid colours, his feeling for intense light and later a partiality towards exotically sensuous effects. But, whereas Delacroix used his barbaric ardour and fierce drama to heighten the emotional expression in his works, the rich, heavily-scented colours in Renoir's *Dancers* are hothouse violets compared with vivid wild orchids. Perhaps this second thought of an Algerian theme was some tribute to Delacroix and all he owed him.

In all fairness, one must remember that at the time Renoir painted the *Dancers* he was in terrible pain from arthritis which was growing increasingly worse since his first bout in 1906. Even the critic Meier-Graefe, whose praise of these pictures has no bounds, admits that they were done in a few weeks under great difficulties, with numerous upheavals and complications. Some say they were the last pictures Renoir painted on his feet. R. Wileński in his book on Renoir gives a more vivid description of the painter, in his wheelchair and mounted on a platform, painting the large, vertical pictures by means of a winding easel. A few years later Renoir was to resort to painting with brushes strapped to his twisted fingers. Despite such difficulties he was still able to complete his last great work, the *Standing Odalisque* of 1919, the year he died.

Perhaps the *Dancers* failed more through a feeling of depression



DANCER WITH CASTANETS: The other panel painted by Pierre-Auguste Renoir in 1909 which along with the *Dancer with Tambourine* (opposite) has been purchased by the National Gallery.

over his growing illness, than a loss of virtuosity. In any case, these panels are tragic documents of a great painter's decline. One remembers Renoir's own words at the start of his illness: "I am done for, slowly but surely; I shall be a little worse each year, it's just a matter of getting used to it. . . ."



BALLERINA'S BIRTHDAY: Alla Osipenko cutting her 29th birthday cake at a welcome-to-England lunch given by the Royal Opera House for the Kirov Ballet on the day of their arrival. Left to right, Georgy Khorkin (the company's director), Irina Kolpakova, Osipenko, Konstantin Sergeyev (principal choreographer), Natalia Dudinskaya (former ballerina and present ballet mistress), Olga Moiseyeva and Inna Zubkovskaya. Photo: Sport and General.

curtain up!

Happy Returns

THE Midlands Festival of Ballet which was presented by Anton Dolin and ABC Television (and the subject of a photo-feature next month) at Coventry brought not only a number of old favourites back to England but also two British male dancers, number ones in each of their respective eras, back to the stage after illness. Anton Dolin, after suffering a serious foot injury which kept him off the stage for some time, danced two numbers. John Gilpin, who had to retire from his guest appearances with the Royal Ballet owing to a back injury, also danced in two numbers. The other stars from overseas — Carla Fracci, Rosella Hightower, Colette Marchand, Margrethe Schanne, Milorad Miskovitch, Kjeld Noack, and André Prokovsky — have also enjoyed great popularity in the past with various visiting and home-based companies.

The idea of ABC Television using some of their profits to promote an understanding of international dance was obviously a good one and it is indeed gratifying to learn that commercial television companies, who up to this point have not shown themselves any too keen on helping the art of ballet, are coming around to the fact that in this way they can help their own prestige as well as the art of ballet — all on the same cheque form.

After that, Dolin left to lecture in Germany. In the autumn he is to make a lecture tour of America and it is also possible that he will do another series of ballet programmes for Tyne-Tees television. So far seven programmes have been tele-recorded and some of the world's greatest names in dance have talked — these include Dame Adeline Genée, Tamara Karsavina, Marie Rambert and Irina Baronova —

while some of the present great names in ballet have danced. It appears that this series will be seen by viewers in the autumn.

John Gilpin, I am happy to announce, will return to the Royal Ballet appearing with both companies. In the autumn he is to tour the provinces dancing a number of, to him, new rôles in the touring company's repertory — from time to time he will return to London to dance at Covent Garden. Here he will dance in *Giselle* with Anya Linden and in *The Sleeping Beauty* with Lynn Seymour.

Ballerinas in new role

ROSELLA HIGHTOWER, the dancer in whom the Marquis de Cuevas Ballet found its permanent ballerina, tells me that she is to retire from the company shortly. She and the company's other ballerina, Nina Vyroubova, are to open a school in Cannes in September. This does not mean that they will retire from the stage forever because both will return from time to time, but the school will be their base.

It is high time that some more of Europe's most famous ballerinas passed on their great art in this way as they have so much to give the next generation. It is also good to know that two ballerinas are able to teach the future generation while still at their height — in this way they are far better examples to a generation than are those who can only dwell on memories of the past.

Home and Away

THE new ballet company which Walter Gore is organising is to be known as the New London Ballet, but so far London is one of the places least likely to see it.

Paula Hinton is the star, and Gore is reviving some of his past successes as well as creating new works. He also hopes, I

hear, to produce some ballets by other choreographers.

The plans to date, however, are for the company to see the light of day first in Germany, and then to tour the continent. Gore would like, it seems, to show the company in this country but economic factors make it difficult.

Now, cannot one of our enterprising theatrical organisations arrange at least for a preview performance before they set off on their travels? Whoever did so would certainly have our gratitude.

Pity the Poor Historians

WALTER GORE'S title for his company will cause confusion to future historians. The New London Ballet can so easily get mixed up with Tudor's London Ballet of pre-war days, and also with the New-Ballet Company of a few years ago. But this is as nothing to the unfortunate Martian ballet historian who has to untangle the ramifications of the Vic-Wells Ballet, the Sadlers Wells Ballet and the various Royal Ballets. Even worse is the confusion about Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo that later became American Ballet Russe de Monte Carlo (whatever that might mean). Venusians will have to overtax supersonic brains to discover at what point Russia annexed Monte Carlo and where this town existed on the American continent.

No Revolution

IT is good indeed to have Jerome Robbins and his Ballets: U.S.A. back in town, and for a longer stay than last time.

How on earth, however, are the people who thought he was introducing a new revolution in ballet going to react to the fact that, of the three novelties in his programme, two are works created for other companies and seen here long ago?

Now that he has shown himself as obviously rooted in his own past (as any artist must be), perhaps it will be possible to enjoy his work for its own sake, and not necessarily to act as if it were something never seen before, a new kind of ballet to make everything that went before seem out-of-date.

The Glorious Fourth of July

AND what exactly did happen, you may ask, after the first performance of the Kirov Ballet's Gala Programme on July 4.

Well, the curtain fell at about 10.05 p.m. on the Cossack dances from *Taras Bulba* and the audience, already clapping and cheering through the finale, went wild with enthusiasm. After a while it was obvious that the audience wanted an encore, that the dancers wanted to give one, but that the band (in that quaint old-fashioned way traditional at Covent Garden) had downed tools when the curtain fell — and gone home.

The dancers mimed their grief at this (who says that the Kirov dancers have neglected mime?) and finally had an idea. They gathered round the edges of the stage and provided an accompaniment of rhythmic applause while spaceman Livshitz launched himself into orbit for a couple of circuits. As I imagine he can never hear the music for this passage because of the cheers, the missing bandmen made little difference.

For the best part of half an hour almost the whole gallery and amphitheatre audience and a large proportion of those in the posh seats stood applauding. The lowering of the safety curtain sent a few home but only an appeal from House Manager John Collins, coupled with the statement that the dancers were then leaving the theatre finally cleared the house after 40 minutes.

Two points: at the end, the applause was obviously a protest at the lack of foresight in allowing the band to scuttle off at once. But this does not mean, however, that the enthusiasm was not genuine.

Secondly, in spite of what was said in a well-known daily newspaper, this was not the excitement of people unused to ballet. Almost every face in sight, right until the bitter end, was that of a familiar habitue of Covent Garden.

Paperbacks to Boards

IT is usual in these days if a book is highly successful that it will eventually find its way into paperback editions, become even more popular and enjoy a new lease of life.

Quite the reverse has happened to G. B. L. Wilson's *A Dictionary of Ballet* which was originally published in paperback form by Penguin Books four years ago. It has enjoyed, and deservedly, an enormous success and is generally considered to be the most comprehensive ballet dictionary yet assembled. It had only one serious failing — we all used it so much that owing to its paper binding, our original copies are falling apart.

Now this problem has been solved and Cassell have brought out a completely revised edition bound in boards (and priced 18/-). It has a lot more information and has the added advantage of being more lasting.

Coming Shortly

WHEN I saw the list of new productions planned for Covent Garden Opera in the next season or two, I totted up the effect on the Arts Council subsidy and decided that we might as well give up the hope of much that was new in ballet.

In spite of this, not only is the Royal Ballet's season in mid-September opening with two new works, but I hear there are more to come.

First on the bill are, as we have already announced, Rodrigues' *Jabez and the Devil* and MacMillan's *Diversions*. The former, with commissioned score by Arnold Cooke and designed by Isabel Lambert, stars Sibley, Grant and MacLeary; while Beriosova and MacLeary have the leads in MacMillan's plotless work to Arthur Bliss's *Music for Strings*. Let us hope that precedent does not apply: the last time the Royal Ballet did two new works on one evening, one of them quickly dis-

appeared from the repertory.

Rumoured for the future is another ballet from MacMillan, possibly for Fonteyn, two from Ashton and two from Jerome Robbins.

Programme Problems

I HAVE long given up expecting programmes and souvenirs to be helpful or accurate, but they are still sometimes intriguing.

For instance: is the re-written synopsis of *The Sleeping Beauty* in the Covent Garden programmes supposed to describe the Kirov production, or our own?

For instance: how did two souvenir books for the Kirov Ballet get published, with so many pictures in common? Why are so many of those pictures wrongly captioned? And has the publisher of one of them lost a packet because his version is not on sale in the theatre?

For instance: when the Covent Garden programme takes into account only Royal Ballet and Kirov Ballet performances in telling us how many performances of *Giselle* there have been in the theatre, are they really trying to fool us that no other company has ever given that work at the Opera House?

And, the question which intrigues me most of all: what on earth is the photograph which claims to illustrate *Les Sylphides* in the souvenir book of the last Royal Ballet tour? A stranger *Sylphides* I've never seen.

happy birthday to...

Meriel Evans
John O'Brien

Ballet Rambert

Audrey Farriss
Teresa Mann
Sylvia Mason
Carole Yule
Esteban Cerdá
Errol Addison
Judith Colpman
Noreen Sopwith
Norman Morrice
Lizzie Rode
Vassilie Trunoff
Peter Darrell
Liubov Tchernicheva
Frederick Ashton
David Poole
Michael Somes
Svetlana Beriosova

The Royal Ballet
Canadian National Ballet
Canadian National Ballet
London's Festival Ballet
Royal Ballet Organisation
Canadian National Ballet
The Royal Ballet
Ballet Rambert
Royal Danish Ballet
London's Festival Ballet
Western Theatre Ballet
The Royal Ballet
Cape Town Ballet
The Royal Ballet
The Royal Ballet

August
25
29
September
1
2
5
5
8
9
10
10
12
14
16
17
17
17
22
24

Dancer You Will Know



BARRY McGRATH

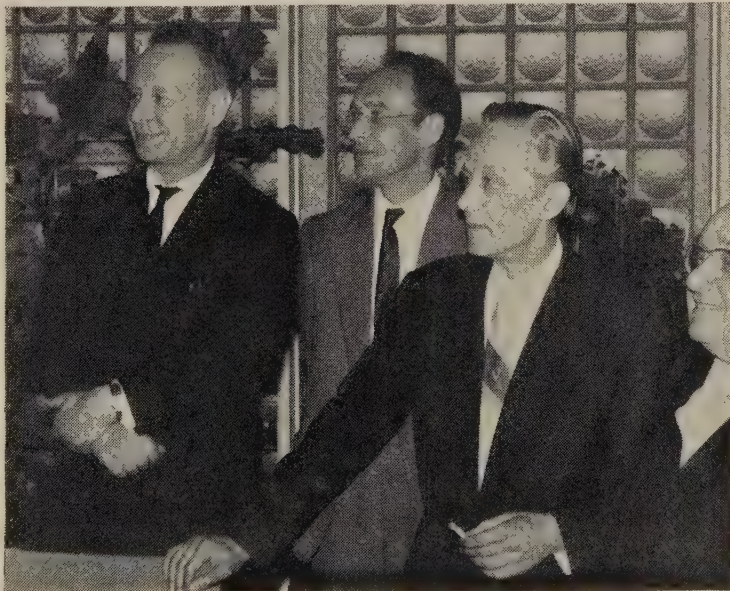
BORN in Dartford, Kent on March 15, 1941. Started training at the Royal Ballet School but left after one year and went to the Legat School where he stayed for five years. At the age of 17 he joined the Festival Ballet in 1958, and was appointed a soloist in 1961.

Rôles: Prokovsky variation in *Variations for Four*; *Prince in The Nutcracker*; *Benno in Swan Lake*; *Soloist in Bourrée Fantasque*.

RIGHT from the beginning of London's Festival Ballet, the company has been notable for the high standard of its male soloists, most of them developed from within the company itself, working their way up from *corps de ballet* to soloist, and in some cases, eventually principal.

The latest young man to start this long upward climb is Barry McGrath, who first attracted attention when, still in his teens, he was chosen to dance André Prokovsky's rôle in Dolin's virtuoso show-piece, *Variations for Four*. His fine bearing and promising technique made a good impression. Obviously he still needed both more finish and more fluency, yet he got through the very testing choreography with a welcome air of confidence and even authority.

His other most notable rôle has been that of *The Nutcracker Prince* in the second act of *The Nutcracker*. Good looking, direct and unaffected in his approach, he showed all the makings of a good classical cavalier. His partnering was capable and his dancing strong and manly. He is very young, and he needs more individuality and greater powers of projection, both of which will probably be acquired with experience. Taken all in all, he can be accounted one of the most promising members of Festival Ballet, and if the right opportunities come his way, his future could be a bright one.



SNOW MAIDEN CREATORS

At a reception at Festival Hall are Soviet designers Piminov and Epishin, choreographer Bourmeister, and Festival Ballet's director, Julian Braunschweig, whose idea it was to present the first Soviet creation on a Western ballet company.

Photo: D and D



Six Decades of American Dance at Boston Festival

Six decades of American dance formed the theme of the Tenth Boston Arts Festival. The script, spoken by Ruth St. Denis, was written by famous critic Walter Terry and is reproduced here.

by **ARTHUR TODD**

ONE of the highlights of the Tenth Boston Arts Festival, held in the Boston Public Gardens, was the "America Dances — 1900-1961" programme that covered six decades of dance in the United States. The entire idea was conceived by Walter Terry, Dance Editor of *The New York Herald Tribune* and he also wrote the script for this production, which ran for one week, playing to audiences of 15,000 or more nightly. Todd Bolender, of the New York City Ballet, was responsible for special choreography, particularly the "bridges of dance" that integrated and unified the programme. The producer was Albert Marre and the Musical Director was Simon Sadoff.

The cast, in order of their appearances, featured: Ruth St. Denis, Mia Slavenska, Edward Villella, Maria Karnilova, Donald Saddler, Don Liberto, Pear Lang, Maria Tallchief, Francisco Moncion, Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade. In addition, those appearing in Miss Lang's Company and or in the so-called choreographic bridges included: Bruce Marks, Norman Walker, Paul Berensohn, Patricia Christopher, Jennifer Muller, Tryntje Ostrander, Pauline DeGroot, Koert Stuyf, Patricia Betty and Robert Powell. As was fitting, Ruth St. Denis, The First Lady of American Dance, now 84, served as narrator for the programme and, for its conclusion, danced "The Incense", the first dance on the first concert programme she performed at the Hudson Theatre in New York, in 1906, and that she also presented in Boston the same year.

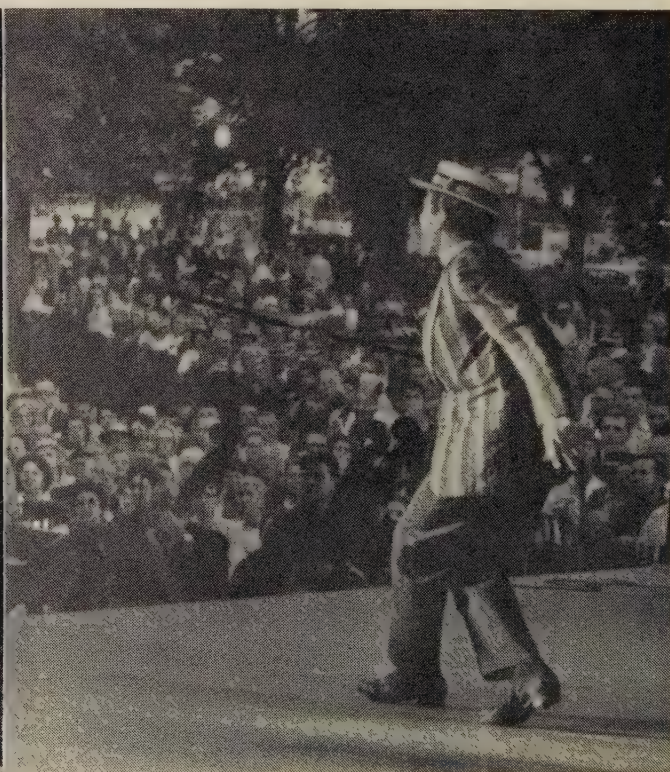
Due to the kind permission of Walter Terry, we are able to reproduce herewith his original notes for narration. Fortunately, too, the Tenth Boston Arts Festival has supplied a photo documentary, as it were, of the highlights of this programme.

NARRATOR (Ruth St. Denis): (Miss Ruth greets audience with traditional Hindu gesture): For many, many years, I have saluted Boston audiences with this ancient gesture of India. As a matter of fact, the first time was just fifty-five years ago — in 1906 — the year of my début as a concert dancer. The gesture, probably, went unnoticed at that time, for one of your Boston newspapers headlined my appearance by proclaiming: "Darkness hid blushes as Ruth St. Denis danced." In those days the audience was shocked by bare feet and by what I fondly hope were tantalizing glimpses of my bare midriff. But this was the turn of the century and a new dance era was beginning. Isadora Duncan and I rebelled against the sterile ballet of *that* day and the empty dance found in the theatres of the time. Isadora turned to classical Greece for inspiration. I turned to the Orient and, later with Ted Shawn, my husband and partner, contributed something, I think, to the birth and the growth of a new dance for America.

TONIGHT, the Boston Arts Festival, for its Tenth Anniversary, presents a programme built upon many of the highlights of fifty years of American dancing. We shall range from the technically glitter-

TIME OFF: Ruth St. Denis, famous American dancer, who danced and narrated at the Boston Festival is seen here between rehearsals and with dancers Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade.
Photo: Barbara Andres

CASTLES AND COHEN: Below left, Maria Karnilova and Donald Saddler in a dance based on Vernon and Irene Castle. Below right, Don Liberto dances and sings in the manner of that famous American artist, George M. Cohen.
Photos: Will Rapport



ing to the dramatically passionate, from the humorous to the spiritual.

Let us start off with social dancing. Everyone can do that — or *thinks* he can. During the period of World War I, the Castles, Vernon and Irene, launched a craze with their delightful exhibition ballroom dances. The Castles provided an image of what the local boy and his girl, or even the mayor and his stout wife, *thought* they looked like when they danced. They may not have been — I think the term in those days was “the cat’s meow”!

— But they dreamed — they dreamed that they were the Castles. — Now, Maria Karnilova, one of the theatre’s most versatile dancers, and Donald Saddler, a highly successful choreographer and dancer, place a nostalgic tongue in cheek while they show us the amusing influences which the Castles exerted on the public. First, the *Hesitation Waltz* (pause — dance). Next the *Tango* (pause — dance). Lastly, the *Turkey Trot*.

THE CASTLES

MARIA KARNILOVA
DONALD SADDLER

(*Hesitation Waltz, Tango and Turkey Trot presented in a light vein reminiscent of the exhibition ballroom dancing of Vernon and Irene Castle and their contemporaries. Choreographed by Mr. Saddler. Music for the Turkey Trot composed by Miss Pitot.*)

I would think that one of the most important members of the theatre in the 1920’s was the song and dance man. And the song and dance man of the ’twenties was George M. Cohan. (Irish, maybe? Well, I was born plain Ruthie Denis and sainted by David Belasco much later in life.) But here is Don Liberto, a dancer and singer for both stage and television, recreating three great Cohan numbers. But he’ll tell you about them as he goes along.

GEORGE M. COHEN

DON LIBERTO

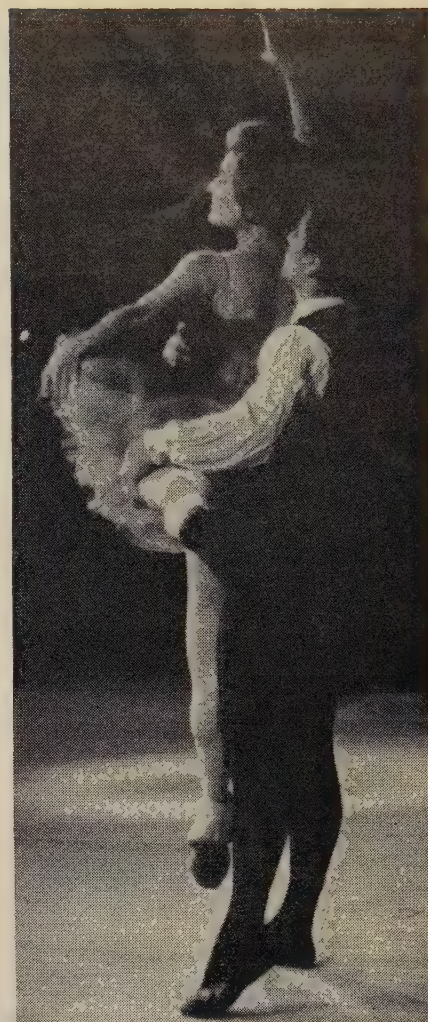
(*A medley of songs and dances in the style of the famous song-and-dance-man of the 1920’s.*)

Ballet, which for centuries had been an imperial or royal affair, also found its way into show business to share the boards with the exhibition ballroom dancers, the Hoofers, the “Line” girls and so on. Incidentally, I once danced in toe shoes in a show called *The Ballet Girl*. Did any of you see it? Quite a few years ago — 1898, I think. But the ballet people in the musicals of the 1920’s didn’t go in for anything as regal as *The Sleeping Beauty* or *Swan Lake*. Marilyn Miller, Harriet Hoctor and other star toe dancers used ballet technique to dance to popular tunes in musicals. But here, now, is an echo of the musical comedy ballet star of the 1920’s, Suki Shorer of the New York City Ballet dancing “Glow Worm”.

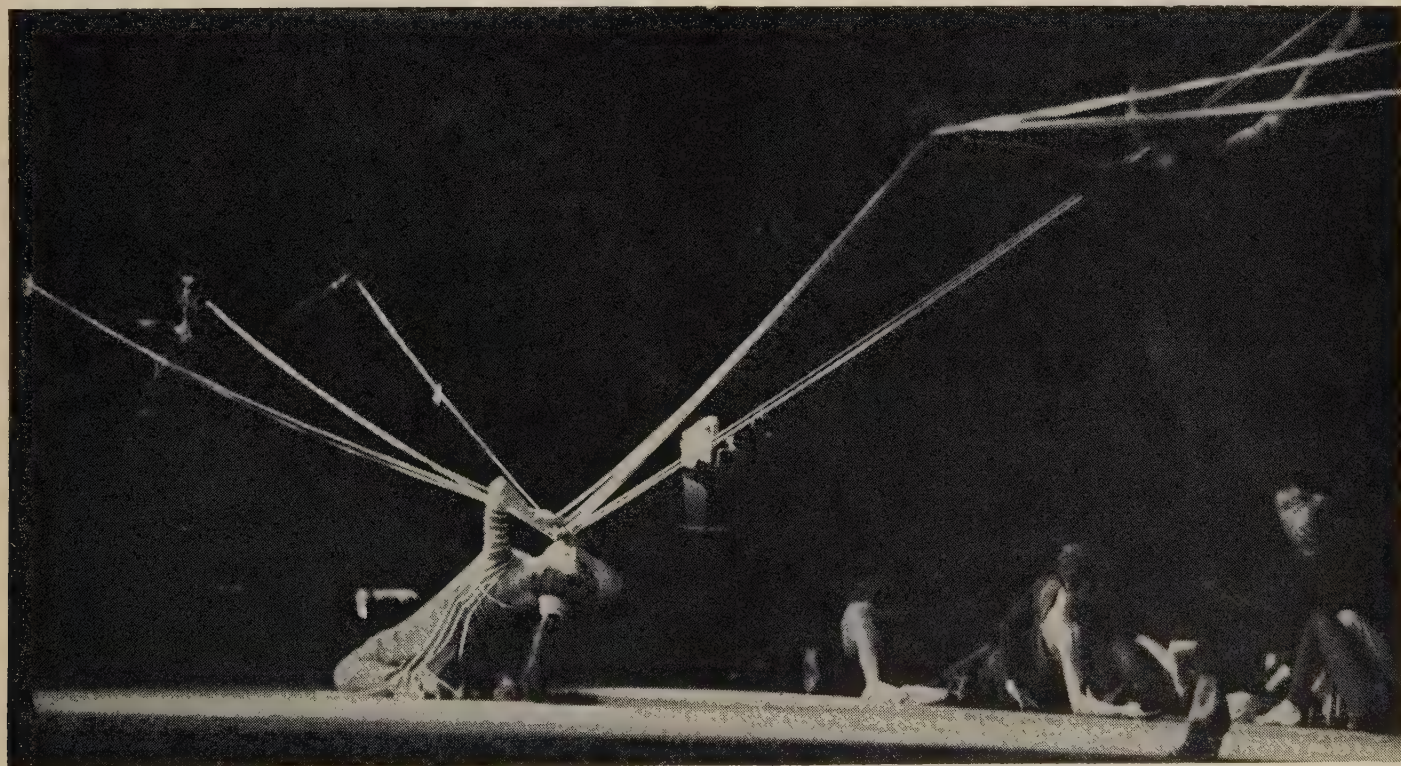
BALLET GIRL

(*A fragment of ballet, danced by a member of the ensemble, in the manner of the musical comedy ballet style of such stars as Harriet Hoctor, Marilyn Miller, Maria Gambarelli.*)

The classical ballet itself, which sent tendrils out into show business, has never completely divorced itself from its regal heritage. At the turn of the century and even today, the great classical ballets of the Golden Age of Petipa (the master who created *The Sleeping Beauty, Nutcracker*) brings enchantment to audiences everywhere. That beautiful ballerina of international renown, Mia Slavenska, and that star virtuoso of the New York City Ballet, Edward Villella, will dance one of Petipa’s immortal creations, from the Spanish-flavoured *Don Quixote*, its most spectacular *grand pas de deux*.



CLASSICAL AND MODERN: Above right, Mia Slavenska and Edward Villella in the *Don Quixote* pas de deux. Below, Pearl Lang and her company in *Shira*, a new work based on a Hebrew poem about the well-spring of life Photos: Will Rapport





ROOTS OF THE BLUES: Alvin Ailey and Carmen de Lavallade in Ailey new Jazz work.
Photo: Will Rapport

DON QUIXOTE (Leon Minkus)
MIA SLAVENSKA
EDWARD VILLELLA

(A classical pas de deux from the 19th-century ballet choreographed by Russia's Marius Petipa and typical of the classical ballet "show pieces" popular with American audiences from the time of the Russian ballet invasion of America in 1910 to the present.)

But the art and dance can never be content with one form, no matter how

beautiful it may be. Isadora, Ted and I made our own departures into the modern age. But maybe — just "maybe", mind you — perhaps we were not quite modern enough for some of the dancers that came along in the late 'twenties and 'thirties. Some of Ted's and my own fledglings — Martha Graham, Doris Humphrey, Charles Weidman — flew the Denishawn Nest. But it didn't stop there. Martha and the others added new techniques, new skills, new concepts to the dance art — an impact felt in all quarters of the theatre. Still,

FIREBIRD AND INCENSE: Below left, Francisco Moncion and Maria Tallchief rehearse the pas de deux from Balanchine's version of *The Firebird*. Below right, Ruth St. Denis revives *Incense* her first concert work created in 1906. Photos: Will Rapport



there is need to move on. And Pearl Lang, who might be described as my artistic granddaughter — for she stems from Martha — also flew the coop after some seasons as Martha's top soloist. Now Pearl has her own company and tonight, she will show us *Shira*, which means "song". It is one of the culminations of the modern dance experiments of the past as it celebrates in dance that eternal spring, or well spring, from which the singing spirit may eternally drink.

SHIRA (Alan Hovhaness)
PEARL LANG and Company

(A new work based upon a Hebrew poem about the well spring of life. Choreographed by Miss Lang in the modern dance idiom which found its first flowering in America in the late 1920's and 1930's and has since grown into a major area of American dance achievement.)

Without modern dance, there could never have been contemporary ballet. While classical ballet continues to feed the great stream of dance, modern ballet, as mirrored in the works of Jerome Robbins, Antony Tudor or Agnes de Mille, represents a fusion of the older technique with the expressive forces of modern dance. This evening, we are to see just such a ballet, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, first commissioned by a ballerina, Mia Slavenska, and choreographed by a modern dancer, Valerie Bettis. In tonight's excerpts from this ballet version of Tennessee Williams' famous play, we shall see Blanche, our heroine, a fading southern woman who seeks to hide her sordid past in remembered finery: and the flower girl, a symbol of death and disaster, a fate figure: Stella, the younger sister and her rough and virile husband, Stanley. And here also is Mitch, who is Blanche's last hope for finding respect-

ability. Now, *Streetcar* with Mia Slavenska, Edward Villella, Suki Shorer and Norman Walker as the four ill-starved lovers.

A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE (Alex North)

MIA SLAVENSKA,
EDWARD VILLELLA and Ensemble
(A work based on the play by Tennessee Williams which combines ballet and modern dance. Choreographed by Valerie Bettis. Music by Alex North.)

In this half-century, our musical theatre has also exploited the powers of classical and contemporary ballet as well as modern dance, jazz and other forms. In my early days, I too was a musical comedy dancer, but what was expected of me were high kicks (which I did very well), splits (which I still do as exercise) and rollovers. But today, dancing in musicals is expected to advance the plot, establish the mood, define character. Many techniques are used and many styles. On this programme we are going to present the individual styles of three major choreographers in the form of friendly spoofs by Donald Saddler and Maria Karnilova. First, Jerome Robbins and his way of combining jazz and ballet along with his own ideas on frenetic action . . . next, the Agnes de Mille style in which the rugged young he-man and the forlorn wallflower are almost inescapable trade marks as are the elaborate, romantic lifts and the little runs hither and yon . . . and, lastly, Michael Kidd's methods. Where props and gimmicks go hand in hand with speed — you know, tell a joke and then run like mad.

MUSICAL COMEDY BALLET

MARIA KARNILOVA

DONALD SADDLER

(A spoof on the enormously successful

choreographic approaches to musical comedy in the styles of Agnes de Mille, Michael Kidd, and Jerome Robbins. Choreography by Mr. Saddler. Music especially composed by Miss Pitor. Orchestrated by Hershey Kay.)

The jazz elements we have just seen in our musical comedy satires have a source: it is *rhythm*, the very core of all dancing. Young Alvin Ailey knows so well the many and diversified rhythms of jazz and tonight he is going to explore those rhythmic sources from which jazz has sprung. He calls his dance *Roots of the Blues* and he and Carmen de Lavallade, assisted by a singer, guitarist and drummer, will dance its four sections: Waiting, Jack of Diamonds, In the Evening, Mean Ol' Frisco.

ROOTS OF THE BLUES (Folk-Popular)

ALVIN AILEY,

CARMEN DE LAVALLADE

Brother John Sellers (Singer)

(The fusion of jazz and modern dance techniques in new choreography by Mr. Ailey. This wholly American dance form serves not only the dance concert field but also musical comedy, night club acts, television and movies.)

With all our 20th-century achievements, we still cherish the ballet — the classical ballet. This year it is officially 300 years old — actually, it is older than that — for in 1661, Louis XIV of France founded the Royal Academy of Dancing in Paris. Three centuries later, in addition to modern ballet forms, the great traditions are continued. Although George Balanchine has created many modern and even experimental works he has, perhaps more than anyone else, extended classicism in ballet to new heights of invention and form. His staging of

Firebird is an example of this. Tonight it will be danced by one of the truly great ballerinas of our age, Maria Tallchief, as the fabulous creature of fire, and Francisco Moncion as the prince . . . But first let me say, that following *Firebird*, I will return to you with more than the oriental greeting with which I opened this programme. I will be back to dance for you *The Incense*, that dance of prayer and supplication, the first Oriental dance ever to be performed in concert in the Western world and one which I performed for you people of Boston fifty-five years ago, immediately following its Broadway Premiere at the Old Hudson Theater in 1906.

THE FIREBIRD (Igor Stravinsky)

MARIA TALLCHIEF

FRANCISCO MONCION

(George Balanchine's contemporary choreography for a history-making ballet. Here, the most advanced ballet technique is employed to reveal the capture of the magical Bird of Fire by a huntsman-prince and to disclose, in the concluding solo by Miss Tallchief, the *Firebird's* gentle power in bringing peace to young lovers and demons alike.)

First, *Firebird* and then, spanning more than a half-century of dance in Boston, *The Incense*.

THE INCENSE (Harvey Loomis)

RUTH ST. DENIS

(The first dance on the first concert programme performed by Miss St. Denis in 1906 and danced by her in Boston the same year.)

Dance and Dancers

THE ROYAL BALLET at Streatham Hill

THAT two-headed mythological beast, the Royal Ballet, has certainly done a great deal of travelling this year — Tokyo, Manila, Leningrad, Moscow, and immediately before the smaller company left on its summer holidays before part of it went to Baalbeck and the Middle East, it turned up in Streatham for the week commencing June 5. Among the interests of this brief season was the first appearance of Christopher Gable as Prince Florimund in *The Sleeping Beauty*. Like his first performance of Prince Siegfried, this was a début with a most unusual distinction, and confirmed my opinion that in Gable British ballet has found a potential *premier danseur* who could one day easily rank with the finest. His youthfully aristocratic bearing had an easy assurance, and his intelligent characterisation, particularly in the Vision Scene was already admirable. Gable's partnering of Doreen Wells, who is continuing to improve as Aurora, proved secure and gallant, but his dancing was not, on this occasion, good enough. He needs more elevation, and even his usual *ballon* appeared temporarily to have deserted him. Admittedly he had only just returned to the company after the injury which caused his withdrawal from the last Covent Garden season. Even so, his performance as a whole compels so much admiration that he demands to be judged on the very strictest level.

The Saturday matinee of this week brought a new cast to Ashton's *Les Deux*

Pigeons and MacMillan's *Solitaire*. The touring version of the sets for the Ashton ballet are most unjust to Dupont's designs, and can give provincial audiences very little idea of what is (or was) one of the best designed British ballets since the war. Furthermore, unlike many people, I did not feel that the ballet was so well suited to a smaller theatre as to the Opera House, while the substitution of clay dummies for the two title rôles was unfortunate but presumably inevitable. (Even so this is not so bad as the omission of the songs in *La Fête Etrange*, which I understand the company is still continuing to do, even in what were supposedly "prestige" performances in Japan.)

Doreen Wells, dancing Lynn Seymour's rôle for the first time, was immediately attractive, kittenish and alert, with a pleasantly understressed touch of pathos at her lover's defection. Naturally she does not dance the part with the same nuance as the part's creator, being both more precise and less eloquent. It was, however, a very commendable first attempt, as was Audrey Farriss's first appearance in Elizabeth Anderton's part of the Gypsy Girl. Farriss produced a surprising turn of intensity in the rôle, and her dancing was lithe and vigorous. Both the newcomers fitted in very well with Donald Britton's Young Man, while Britton himself seemed considerably improved in the part, dancing the variation, for example, with almost breathtaking zest.

Kathleen Geldard danced neatly as the Young Girl in *Solitaire*, but as yet quite

AT HOME

misses the ballet's emotional overtones, failing to convey any of the two or three valid connotations that can be placed upon the work's sub-title — "A kind of game for one . . ." Robert Mead looked elegantly miscast in Boulton's old rôle, where aplomb and *brio* are all. C. B.

Invited replacements

YOU knew where you were with the husband in *The Invitation* as Desmond Doyle played him. A roving eye, a warm heart, affections on an easy rein; attractive and attracted to women, and too self-indulgent.

With Doyle in hospital for minor surgery, Alexander Bennett played the part for the first time at Streatham Hill on June 8. His interpretation is a different kettle of fish — and a pretty cold fish too. Cold, self-centred, even his anger with his wife is icy where Doyle's blazed. A pompous man, too, even to his up-curling moustache; no obvious charm and very concerned for appearances. Why on earth should the young girl fall for him?

The fact is that girls are constantly being attracted to the most unlikely men, and this one had enough maturity and authority to appeal to a very young girl seeking a father-figure as an alternative to her very immature boy friend. Once accept this, and the ballet falls into place again round a new centre.

This is, in fact, a more "moral" interpretation. Most men would like to be as charming and irresistible as the figure played by Doyle (even if we draw the line

at rape and seduction of juveniles), but no one would make excuses for the character Bennett plays.

More moral, but not quite so good, if only because the ending does not ring quite true. Shallow remorse is right for Doyle; Bennett should, I feel, be angry, with himself, with the girl and with his wife. Even so, I liked this best of the three replacements in the leading rôles of *The Invitation* so far.

From rape to murder, and *Sweeney Todd*. Here Doyle's absence caused Ian Hamilton to be transferred from the super-Benno figure of Colonel Jeffrey to the dashing young sailor hero Mark. Pink and bright-faced under the chestnut wig, he looked clean, fresh and handsome; everything a hero should be. In the way of dancing, this rôle makes few more demands than the one he formerly played, so his success here was predictable. The pleasant surprise was his partnering, which looked much more capable and assured than in any other rôle I have yet seen him play.

Colonel Jeffrey was taken first by Adrian Grater and, a week later (Grater himself then being on the sick list) by Alan Alder. Grater, tall and lugubrious, played the rôle very much as Hamilton does — happiness kept breaking through. Alder, short and peppery, was more the typical stage idea of an army officer with service in India. Both were well up to the part's demands.

All three men (Hamilton, Grater, Alder) made the most of the many opportunities for comic by-play in their new rôles. It is easy to be condescending about the weaknesses of *Sweeney Todd*, but there are few ballets which make an audience laugh so much, and this is no mean virtue.

John Percival.

In Golders Green

DANCERS are like horses in this respect: either they have class or they have not, and training, coaching, nursing, though

they can work wonders, cannot remedy this lack. Watching Phyllis Spira's first attempt at the lonely girl in *Solitaire* (Golders Green Hippodrome, June 17), I became convinced that this girl has class. Not just in the smoothness of her turns and extensions, although these were remarkably good; nor only in the beautifully clean line of her body in the air when she jumped; but in the style that showed through each movement and every pose.

Not yet a fully-rounded interpretation of the part (something achieved so far only by Margaret Hill, the rôle's creator, and by Lynn Seymour), this was nonetheless conceived very much on the right lines. Spira's attractive little monkey-face, warmed by an appealing smile, is very lively and expressive. She makes the sense, as well as the pattern, of the choreography explicit through her dancing, and given time this could mature into an outstanding performance.

Robert Mead, who appeared as the Bluebird in a performance of *The Sleeping Beauty* on June 15, is another dancer whose innate quality of movement cannot be missed. Yet in this performance, almost everything else was missing.

Every now and again he would produce a magnificent pose or achieve a movement perfectly rounded and finished — then back to what looked to me like a kind of floundering desperation. He had danced the rôle, I believe, only once before, and that some time ago. In other parts, he has developed so much that I refuse to believe he cannot make more of the Bluebird than on this occasion. If he can learn to extend and exploit his obvious talent throughout the rôle, his pure style could shine to full advantage.

Dancing with him was Elizabeth Anderson, almost equally erratic, and I imagine equally unprepared. The smaller section of the Royal Ballet has some good dancers

and, just as important, someone (Field, perhaps, or Legerton, or both) able and willing to help them in making the best of themselves.

J. P.

DOMENICO DANCE ENSEMBLE

THE Domenico Dance Ensemble is a small group (planned as four dancers, but currently only three) who have devoted themselves to studying the historical court dances of western Europe. I went to their first public performance, given recently in the Great Drawing Room of the Arts Council, expecting something of antiquarian interest but no theatrical excitement. I was wrong.

The programme ranged over four centuries, from the stately and ceremonious *Presoniera* composed in 15th century Italy by Domenico of Ferrara, and written down by his pupil William the Jew, to a sprightly Gigue from an 18th century French court ballet. To describe these, and the many other dances given during the evening, would be superfluous: anyone who wants may read the books on historical dances by the late Melusine Wood and find out about them in that way.

The important point is that these dances were worth resuscitating and presenting to a new public. They have charm, grace, humour, and they throw light on the arts, manners and aspirations of generations of past dancers. They could be valuable to dancers, choreographers, students of history and the arts; moreover, they are entertaining.

On a conventional stage, they might suffer, since they were meant to be seen in the round, but this should make them easier to present in any hall or large room. The dancers (Wendy Hilton, Molly Kenny and John Broome), their teacher Belinda Quirey, and whoever made the beautiful period costumes, deserve to find wider audiences.

J. P.

Ballet Dates

THE ROYAL BALLET at Covent Garden

- September**
- 13 *La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair).
 - 15 *Lady and the Fool, Diversions* (World Première), *Jabez and the Devil* (World Première).
 - 19 *Lady and the Fool, Diversions*, *Jabez and the Devil*.
 - 23 (E) *Les Patineurs*, *Giselle* (Fonteyn, Blair).
 - 26 *La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair).
 - 28 *Les Patineurs*, *Giselle* (Fonteyn, Blair).
 - 30 *Lady and the Fool, Jabez and the Devil, Diversions*.

- October**
- 3 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes).
 - 4 *Les Patineurs*, *Giselle* (Nerina, Blair).
 - 9 *Antigone, Symphonic Variations, The Firebird*.
 - 13 *Ondine* (Beriosova, MacLeary).
 - 17 *Ondine* (Fonteyn, Somes).
 - 19 *La Fille Mal Gardée* (Nerina, Blair).
 - 21 *Petrushka, Diversions, Daphnis and Chloë*.

THE ROYAL BALLET on tour

- September**
- 25 The Pavilion, Bournemouth.
- October**
- 2 The Pavilion, Torquay (2 weeks).
 - 16 The New Theatre, Oxford (2 weeks).
 - 30 The Opera House, Manchester.
- November**
- 6 The Kings Theatre, Glasgow.
 - 13 The Kings Theatre, Edinburgh.
 - 20 Theatre Royal, Newcastle.
 - 27 The Royal Court, Liverpool.
- December**
- 4 The Lyceum, Sheffield.

BALLET RAMBERT at the Sadler's Wells Theatre

- July**
- 25 *Laidrette, A Place in the Desert, Night and Silence, Façade*.
 - 26 *Laidrette, A Place in the Desert, Night and Silence, Façade*.
 - 27 Programme of Antony Tudor ballets.
 - 28 *Giselle, A Place in the Desert*.
 - 29 (M) *Giselle, A Place in the Desert*.
 - 29 (E) *Giselle, A Place in the Desert*.
 - 31 *Two Brothers, Night Shadow, Winter Night, Hazana*.
- August**
- 1 *Two Brothers, Night Shadow, Winter Night, Hazana*.
 - 2 Programme of Antony Tudor ballets.

- 3 *Winter Night, Czerny-ana, A Place in the Desert, Gala Performance*.
 - 4 *La Sylphide, Night Shadow*.
 - 5 (M) *La Sylphide, A Place in the Desert*.
 - 5 (E) *La Sylphide, A Place in the Desert*.
- September**
- 4 The Hippodrome, Bristol.
 - 11 The Marlowe Theatre, Canterbury.
 - 18 Wimbledon Theatre, Wimbledon.
 - 25 The Little Theatre, Middlesbrough.
- October**
- 2 The Empire Theatre, Sunderland.
 - 9 The New Theatre, Hull.
 - 16 The Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton.
 - 30 Theatre Royal, Exeter.

- November**
- 6 The Arts Theatre, Cambridge.
 - 13 Theatre Royal, Bath.
 - 20 The New Theatre, Cardiff.
 - 27 Theatre Royal, Nottingham.
- December**
- 4 Theatre Royal, Norwich.

LONDON'S FESTIVAL BALLET at the Royal Festival Hall, London

- July**
- 17-29 World première of *The Snow Maiden*.
- 31-August 5** *Swan Lake* (new Bourmeister production of Act 2), *The Witch Boy, Bourrée Fantasque*.

- 7-12 *The Snow Maiden*. (Evenings at 8 p.m.; Matinées, Sats. only, at 5 p.m.)

For programmes for the rest of the London season until September 16, see daily press.

- October**
- 2 The Coventry Theatre, Coventry.
 - 9 The Empire Theatre, Liverpool.
 - 16 The Gaumont Theatre, Ipswich.
 - 30 The Gaumont Theatre, Southampton.
- November**
- 6 The Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham.

WESTERN THEATRE BALLET

- July**
- 24 The Repertory Theatre, Northampton.
 - 31 The Repertory Theatre, Birmingham (2 weeks).
- September**
- 4 The Empire Theatre, Edinburgh.

JEROME ROBBINS BALLETS: U.S.A.

at the Saville Theatre, London, on August 1 to 19.

THE UKRAINIAN COSSACK COMPANY

at the Royal Albert Hall on September 19 to October 14.

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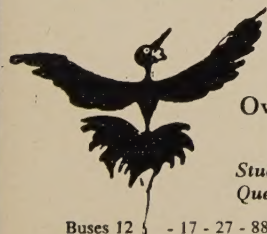
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